United Nations S/PV.6341

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6341st meeting

Wednesday, 16 June 2010, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Espinosa Cantellano/Mr. Heller/Mr. Puente	(Mexico)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mr. Moretti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Ms. Ziade
	Nigeria	Mr. Lolo
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181)

Letter dated 15 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/314)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-40745 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181)

Letter dated 15 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/314)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Myanmar, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda.

In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 11 June 2010 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, has been issued as document S/2010/316 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in and be inscribed on the list of speakers for he meeting of the Security Council that will be held on Wednesday, 16 June 2010, in connection with the item 'Children and armed conflict'."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; and Ms. Manju Gurung.

It is so decided.

I should like also to inform the Council that I have received a letter from His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, in which he requests to be invited, in his capacity as acting head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Serrano to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2010/181, containing the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and document S/2010/314, containing a letter dated 15 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

Let me say that it is a great honour for me, as Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, to be here today to preside over this special meeting of the Security Council on this topic of particular importance to us all. I take this opportunity to thank all members of the Security Council for the support they have extended to Mexico throughout its participation in the work of the Council and particularly in the course of its presidency this month.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Mr. Atul Khare, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson and Ms. Manju Gurung.

I shall now give the floor to Ms. Coomaraswamy.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: I wish once again to thank the Government of Mexico for presiding over this important debate on children and armed conflict. Your presence here today, Madame Minister, elevates the discussion and your words provide a framework for the serious deliberations that must follow.

Since the last report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158), we have had some measurable progress in important areas. The Security Council adopted resolution 1882 (2009), which now makes sexual violence against children and the killing and maiming of children contrary to international law grounds for listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report. This naming and shaming exercise, along with the possibility of sanctions against persistent violators, has persuaded parties to cease their reprehensible behaviour and should deter others from future offences. The collective voice of the Council, guided by the common moral compunction of humanity to protect its children, must be used to make outcasts of those who commit unspeakable acts against children in war.

I cannot emphasize enough how important this is. Just two weeks ago, I was in Gulu, Uganda, where I met with a girl named Agnes who had just escaped from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). She fled with a baby born of rape, fearing for her life and that of her infant child as the LRA splintered and regrouped across the region. She could hardly express herself. Years of abuse had broken her spirit. We cannot ignore Agnes or those like her. The Council's decision to make sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children grounds for listing by the Secretary-General is the first step in the right direction.

The Council's decision to expand the triggers requires that we further develop our methodologies and practices to collect reliable information and to guide the field with regard to action plans. For the past few months, my Office has been working with Ms. Patricia Sellers, whose extensive experience with both the International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda has brought new momentum to the discussions on action plans. In close consultation with our United Nations partners, she is developing templates for action plans on the killing and maiming of children and on sexual violence against children. I am glad to say that she is finalizing guidance to the field on resolution 1882 (2009), which will enhance the monitoring and reporting on the two triggers. With regard to sexual violence in particular, I welcome the appointment of Ms. Margot Wallström, the new Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and I am pleased to report that we are already working very closely and are looking into common strategies. I look forward to a fruitful collaboration.

Parties listed in the Secretary-General's report can be de-listed if they enter into an action plan with the United Nations We have also had marked successes with regard to the formulation of action plans required by the Security Council. Within the framework of such an action plan, the Maoist party in Nepal released almost 3,000 minors in an extraordinary process in which the whole United Nations worked together as one. My office, the United Nations Mission in Nepal, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as their national partners, worked very closely together to secure the agreement and implement the terms of the release.

It was an important moment for the United Nations in Nepal. Children were identified, registered and sent home. At the moment, our child protection partners are tracking these boys and girls in their home villages to ensure that they are included in the reintegration process. Later this morning, the Council will hear from Manju, a Nepali girl who was taken by the Maoist forces at the age of 13 and remained with them for two years. Since her release, she has rebuilt her life and is a model for other children. Manju has travelled a long way to share her story with us so that her experience will not be repeated in any part of the world.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front from the Philippines has also entered into an action plan with the United Nations. The terms have been agreed and activities outlined. Our main challenge now is to assist in the reintegration of these children. Unless we provide the United Nations in the Philippines with assistance to secure schooling or livelihood training, they will either be re-recruited or tempted by other, less peaceful avenues. It is crucial that the international community step up to the plate and give these children a real future. I appeal to all Member States represented here to support the reintegration process. I also call upon the ceasefire mechanism in place in Mindanao to include the monitoring of child rights violations in its mandated activities.

In the Sudan, there have also been some successes. In the past month, we have moved forward on commitments by the Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abu Gasim from Darfur to release children and to give unhindered access to the United Nations for verification purposes. The ceasefire agreement between the Liberation and Justice Movement and the Government of the Sudan includes specific key provisions for the release of children and is reflective of the priority and commitment to children on the side of the parties. I urge that all subsequent ceasefire or peace agreements include provisions for child protection. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army has also entered into an action plan for the release of children associated with their forces this year. Again, child protection partners have the responsibility to make this reintegration a success.

Despite these successes, many challenges remain. In the report before the Council (S/2010/181), the Secretary-General has highlighted a list of the most persistent violators who have been on the annexes of his reports for a minimum of five years. As the Secretary-General's independent voice for children affected by armed conflict, it is my duty to persuade this body to move forward on taking action against these violators. In this regard, resolution 1882 (2009) calls for closer cooperation among sanctions committees of the Council. The Sanctions Committee on the Democratic Republic of the Congo had the foresight to include crimes against children as grounds for listing, and I urge other sanctions committees to also consider the same. I had the honour of addressing the Democratic Republic of the Congo Committee and to thank its members for the fair hearing they gave to our recommendations. I look forward to deeper engagement with other relevant sanctions committees.

That being said, we would also need to move forward to devise appropriate mechanisms to deal with the large number of parties listed in the Secretary-General's annexes that are not covered by sanctions committees. I hope that the Council will sharpen its focus on this issue so that perpetrators do not sense reluctance on the part of the Council to hold them fully accountable. After all these noble efforts by this body, the Security Council should not be perceived to be part of the cycle of impunity.

Many parties have been listed in the Secretary-General's reports for recruiting and using children, committing sexual violence against children, and killing and maiming children. The vast majority are non-State actors, who need to enter into action plans with the United Nations to be de-listed. We urge Governments to endorse this process in the best interest of the children as a humanitarian imperative towards saving children's lives. Without access to dialogue with non-State actors on action plans, the chances of securing the release of children is very slim.

In recent times, new issues have also emerged with regard to children and armed conflict. The first is the ever-increasing pattern of attacks on schools. This has become a very disturbing phenomenon that requires urgent attention. The United Nations system has always argued that children and schools should be zones of peace. Instead, schools themselves are increasingly being targeted. The classroom, once a sacred space, has become a place of fear. It is important that we respond to this crisis effectively, working with local communities so that children, especially girls, are not placed at risk and are not denied their right to education during or after conflict.

We are also discovering that more and more children are being used for military intelligence purposes by different armed forces and groups around the world. Recently, we have been engaged in bilateral advocacy against this practice in a number of situations. Children should be handed over to child protection institutions and partners within 48 hours of their capture. This is extremely important. Placing them at risk or subjecting them to prolonged interrogation will only make it more difficult for their proper reintegration into their communities.

We are increasingly concerned about the changing nature of warfare in different parts of the world and the difficult challenges it poses for child protection partners. In some wars, we find children being used as suicide bombers; there were seven such cases in Afghanistan and several in Iraq in 2009. Attacks on schools and denial of humanitarian access, where the neutrality of humanitarian actors is not respected, are also posing major dilemmas. We are just starting to fully explore how we should deal with such phenomena. We do not as yet have the answers.

Counterinsurgency also poses its own set of difficulties. The number of children being killed in aerial bombardments and drone strikes is a matter of great concern. I had the opportunity to meet General McChrystal, the commander of the international forces in Afghanistan, who reassured me that the protection of civilians is an important part of military strategy in Afghanistan and explained the measures taken to minimize civilian casualties. Nevertheless, children continue to die, and in 2009 137 Afghan children were killed by aerial bombardment alone. We do commend the steps taken recently in this regard, but would like to impress upon all actors that vigilance is necessary and that the killing of children must be avoided at all cost.

Finally, it is 10 years since the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict was adopted. My office, along with our partners, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has begun the "Zero Under Eighteen" campaign for the universal ratification of the Protocol. I will be knocking on the doors of those who have not signed and ratified, and encouraging those who have ratified to speak to their neighbours. Universal ratification signifies an international moral consensus — a consensus that is necessary to give further strength to laws and norms protecting children from unlawful recruitment.

In my work with this Council, I have been encouraged by the political will to reach consensus on issues relating to children. It is this consensus that empowers and emboldens us, both in the field and at Headquarters, to work with heart and spirit for the protection of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Coomaraswamy for her statement and for the information she has given us, and I appreciate the work she is doing. We encourage her to continue moving forward with the same dedication and enthusiasm.

I now give the floor to Mr. Atul Khare.

Mr. Khare: I thank you, Madame, for inviting the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to participate in this important debate. It is a great honour for me to address the Security Council on the critical issue of the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

The adoption of resolution 1261 (1999) placed the protection of children firmly on the peace and security agenda. With a total of seven Security Council resolutions, the issue of children and armed conflict is undoubtedly one in which the Security Council has invested deeply in the past decade. Nonetheless, children continue to be victimized in conflict situations around the world, and our sustained engagement is required on this vital issue. In that regard, for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the inclusion of specific child protection provisions in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the related deployment of child protection advisers to peacekeeping operations have helped us to follow up on the implementation of key aspects of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

In collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has continued to strengthen its activities to protect children affected by conflict in the countries where peacekeeping missions are deployed. Today, we have child protection advisers in nine peacekeeping operations. In the past year, we have established a focal point in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, and efforts are under way to strengthen our child protection presence in Afghanistan with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

The child protection advisers have continued to contribute directly to the missions' priority-setting and policy formulation and are working to ensure that concerns related to children affected by conflict are adequately addressed throughout our activities by promoting mainstreaming, monitoring and reporting, training and advocacy. We believe that it is crucial to strengthen the deployment of child protection advisers wherever children are significantly affected by conflict.

At the political level in the field, peacekeeping missions are engaging in dialogue with parties to conflicts towards the preparation of action plans to end and address the grave violations committed against children affected by armed conflict. We are also following up on commitments obtained by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict during her high-level visits and advocacy missions. This priority activity is undertaken hand in hand with UNICEF and other members of the United Nations task forces on monitoring and reporting at the country level.

Alongside other child protection actors, we have registered significant progress in this regard. In April, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) reported that the Sudan Liberation Army/Abu Gasim had issued a command order, prohibiting the recruitment, mobilization and use of child soldiers. This followed a meeting between UNAMID, UNICEF and the armed group to discuss the development of actions plans, following a commitment issued by the group to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during her visit to the Sudan in November 2009.

Efforts continue to reach out to armed groups for commitment and implementation of action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other grave violations committed against children. Yesterday, 15 June, the Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will also made commitments to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and issued a command order to that effect. In Chad last week, Governments of the region, including those of Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Niger, Nigeria and the Sudan, signed the N'Djamena Declaration, stressing the need to end the recruitment and use of children by armed forces.

At the operational level, monitoring and reporting on grave violations committed against children are an ongoing priority. Today, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations co-chairs five monitoring and reporting mechanisms of country-level task forces. We attach great importance to the monitoring and reporting mechanism process, which is pivotal to promoting accountability for violations committed against children and strengthening the overall response to the needs of children in conflict situations.

With the recent adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), we are working to improve the collection of accurate, timely and verified information by leveraging other monitoring capacities and resources within peacekeeping operations. Most importantly, we are exploring ways of improving our reporting on sexual violence committed against children, in close collaboration with all key monitoring and reporting mechanism partners in the light of resolution 1888 (2009) on sexual violence in armed conflict.

We are also investing heavily in providing training on child protection and child rights for all of our peacekeepers, as required by the Security Council. Training is one of the most important tools for creating awareness of the impact of armed conflict on children, the standards that govern child protection, and the role that each peacekeeper can play in protecting children. Last year alone, over 8,500 peacekeeping personnel received training on child protection in four peacekeeping missions. Over 66 per cent of those trained were military personnel, and another 26 per cent were police personnel.

In the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti, our advisers are reporting that the training has resulted in a heightened awareness of key child protection issues among the military and the police, and yielded specific interventions for the benefit of children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, our military observers trained in child protection are working in close collaboration with our child protection teams and human rights components to provide critical information on the situation of children in remote and inaccessible areas. In Haiti, the military personnel of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti are currently developing their own guidelines on child protection with the support of our child protection team. In Southern Sudan, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan has provided support to the local police in establishing specific women's and children's desks and offering training to them, jointly with our child protection teams.

Recognizing the importance of providing training for all peacekeeping personnel on child protection, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is partnering with UNICEF, with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict and with Save the Children Sweden in an initiative aimed at reviewing and standardizing our training materials and strengthening pre-deployment and in-mission training to extend our overall reach and cover.

At the strategic and policy level, in June last year the Department adopted a system-wide policy on mainstreaming the protection of children affected by armed conflict into the work of United Nations peacekeeping operations. That policy underscores the important role that the special representatives of the Secretary-General must play in promoting the rights and concerns of children affected by armed conflict and in ensuring effective and systematic follow-up to Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict. That policy is our highest-level commitment to the protection of children in armed conflict, and we are working towards the development of an implementation plan that will provide the necessary operational guidance for our teams on the ground.

The Department recognizes the importance of coordinating closely with other operational actors, especially UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and we have prioritized the strengthening and structuring our partnerships with those key actors as part of our delivery on child protection. At both Headquarters and the field level, the Department will continue to develop protection strategies with UNICEF and relevant child protection agencies and with our partners in the United Nations country team, building on the comparative advantages of each actor.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our unwavering commitment to the protection of children in conflict situations, being fully aware that it is only by our collective and concerted engagement at all levels that we can secure real protection for children affected by war. As always, we continue to look to the Security Council for specific mandates, leadership, guidance and support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Khare for the very important information he has given us today.

I now give the floor to Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Johnson: Children affected by armed conflict deserve protection. Not only that, they have the right to be protected from all violations of their rights. The Security Council has shown courage in leading international efforts to end grave violations against children in armed conflict. We truly appreciate that.

On behalf of UNICEF, I would also like to thank Mexico for its exceptional leadership in driving this agenda forward in the Security Council. Without Mexico's support and dedication and that of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, progress we have seen in recent years would not have been possible. And with your continued commitment and determination, Madam President, and that of all Council members, we may have the opportunity to end grave violations against children in armed conflict.

We must never forget what is at stake. Last year, I visited a major demobilization centre operated by the armed forces in Chad. The boys were still in combat uniform when I met them. Their stories were horrific — they had witnessed brutal attacks on their homes and families; they had seen their houses burnt, their livelihoods destroyed. The boys had been forced to join rebel groups. When I asked them about their hopes for the future, all ten had one singular, uniform ambition: education. They wanted to go to school. That was the key to their future.

We cannot ignore their stories or deny them the fulfilment of their dreams. That is within our collective reach, but it will require sustained engagement at the highest possible level, stronger partnerships and robust delivery in the field. Together we can report on violations and identify violators. We can take action to ensure compliance with Security Council provisions, and we can protect and assist those that are the most vulnerable: children.

The past year has been marked by notable progress. Action plans to end child recruitment have been signed by parties to conflict in the Philippines, Nepal and the Sudan. Thousands of children have been released from armed groups and armed forces. In 2009, a little over 9,500 children were removed from armed groups and armed forces in countries implementing the monitoring and reporting mechanism. However, that number does not include the almost 3,000 children who were released in Nepal — which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has just referred to — in January and February this year. It does include 5,900 children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 1,400 children in the Sudan who have now embarked on the long and challenging process of reintegration with their families and communities.

These numbers tell a compelling story: Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) work. They are making a real difference in children's lives. Now we need to take our collective efforts one step further — not a small step, but a major one. We need to make change happen in the lives of many more children, as the Special Representative just highlighted in her statement.

Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) was a formidable breakthrough. The vision and courage demonstrated by the Council in passing that resolution cannot be overstated. It expands the triggers for listing parties so that more of the grave violations are associated with the Council's naming and shaming efforts. Such grave violations also merit strong reactions and punitive measures against the perpetrators. We are pleased that the Security Council is willing to take such action.

With resolution 1888 (2009), on sexual violence and rape as a weapon of war, the Council provides a further opportunity to consolidate the framework at our disposal to hold violators accountable. On our side, we stand ready to support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, in her important mission.

UNICEF welcomes the two triggers for listing of parties who commit rape and other forms of grave sexual violence and who kill and maim children. Sexual violence is still regularly used as a weapon of war with the strategic intent to humiliate and demoralize individuals, tear apart families and destroy communities. As many of us have experienced during visits to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the stories women and girls tell us are just horrific. They bear the brunt of that violence. The humiliation, stigma, exclusion and deep physical and psychological scars remain with them, in many cases destroying their lives.

Children still account for a considerable number of war-related casualties. When they are not directly targeted or used in war, they often fall victim to the indiscriminate use of force. They are most affected by landmines, cluster munitions and other indiscriminate weapons and explosive remnants of war. It is commendable that the Security Council has decided to address this most basic grave violation against the rights of children.

In total, therefore, three of the six grave violations in conflict are now subject to the Security Council framework. To be able to list, we need adequate monitoring and reporting mechanisms. UNICEF is fully committed to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanisms in relation to all three violations in all countries concerned. We also need monitoring and reporting to hold violators accountable. Indeed, our ambition should be to utilize the full potential of this framework, holding perpetrators accountable and bringing them to justice, and to enforce measures against violators through existing sanctions regimes.

We also need to focus on other grave violations against children. The Special Representative has already expressed concern about the trend of attacks on schools. That trend must be reversed. In addition, the continued denial of humanitarian access in situations of armed conflict, such as in Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan, has grave implications for children. Our colleagues in the field in those situations take considerable risk when they engage with parties to conflict, often non-State actors, to reach children in need of assistance, to provide protection where there is no rule of law and to safeguard schools as zones of peace. That is easier said than done. We constantly look for new approaches to deliver on our promise to children in the field. Humanitarian access is imperative, and denying it is unacceptable.

The child protection framework for children and armed conflict supported by the Security Council spells out the accountability of perpetrators. At the same time, it lays out the responsibilities of key stakeholders, including the Security Council and its Working Group, concerned national Governments, the United Nations, Member States, donors and civil society. Thanks to the monitoring and reporting in countries listed by the Council and other situations of concern, we cannot claim ignorance when it comes to the situation of children. The extent of grave violations perpetrated against children is known. Never have we been so well informed. Silence is not an option, nor is inaction. We have a collective duty to act. We all are accountable to the children whose stories we hear.

UNICEF stands ready to assist the Security Council and its Working Group as it utilizes all the tools at its disposal for clear and determined action. We look forward to supporting possible missions to the field to consider the information compiled by our colleagues, assisting in-country advocacy efforts and helping mobilize the required resources to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict. As indicated in resolution 1882 (2009), donors must also ensure that operational agencies have the necessary capacity to address grave violations and deliver results for children.

Together with our partners, UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative have taken several key initiatives to strengthen the monitoring of grave violations in follow-up to resolution 1882 (2009), including a global roll-out of a new monitoring and reporting mechanism field manual and training toolkit, as well as the development of practical action plan templates. This will lead to a more systematic and effective implementation of the mechanism, where UNICEF normally is co-chair in the field.

In UNICEF, we have ensured that the protection of children and women in armed conflict and other crises are prioritized in our Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. We are scaling up initiatives to raise awareness and develop capacity across the board — among our country offices in all countries listed and situations of concern, in regional offices and headquarters and among key partners — to improve the monitoring and reporting mechanism and our protection programmes. None of that would be possible without strong partnerships. Cooperation with United Nations entities — in particular peacekeeping and the child protection advisers, as my colleague just explained, and special political missions — and with concerned Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society is essential to all our efforts.

But to be able to take action, the legal framework must be in place. A couple of weeks ago we commemorated the tenth anniversary of the two Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF strongly urges all Member States that have not yet signed, ratified and implemented the Optional Protocols to do so as a matter of priority and urgency. We encourage all Member States to effectively implement the Paris Commitments and Paris Principles on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups.

This is also the year of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Somalia is the only country in the world where an entire generation — the two past decades — has known only violence and conflict and where grave violations are committed against children every day, by all parties.

As children in Somalia deserve a better future, so does the boy whom I met in the Central African Republic a few months back. He was only nine years old and had been demobilized from the rebel group Armée pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie. As tears streamed down his cheeks, he told me about the horrible pictures that came before his eyes over and over again. They would never leave his head. His name was Futur. His only wish was to go home. Indeed, for Futur and for those 10 boys in Chad, and for millions of other children, the principles and values of the Convention stand as a beacon of hope for a better future. It is our collective obligation to turn them into reality in their lives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, for her important briefing. I should also like to highlight the value of the work on peacekeeping being done jointly by UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, non-governmental organizations and civil society. I also wish to emphasize the need for all of us to continue to encourage that teamwork in order to strengthen our ability to act.

I now give the floor to Ms. Manju Gurung, who, as Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy has already pointed out, was a child soldier in Nepal.

Ms. Gurung (*spoke in Nepalese; English text provided by the speaker*): Let me thank you for inviting me. It is a great honour for me.

I am a girl from Nepal. I was born in the central region of Nepal. I'm here not only to talk about my own story but on behalf of all children in armed conflict who face and survive the atrocities of war. I will start by telling you some of the stories of my past.

In my family, I am the second of five children. I have a mother and father, one elder sister, two younger sisters and one younger brother. My family is very poor. My father drives a rickshaw from morning to evening and my mom works at home and also does agricultural work. It is difficult for us to have good clothing and good food. Despite our difficulties, my parents had managed to send me and my siblings to school.

I was 13 years old when I completed fifth grade and moved to a new school to start the sixth grade. The new school was a one-hour hike up a steep hill from my home. At that time, I had just started thinking about my future. My dream was to complete my education and become a teacher in my own village. But things did not happen the way that I had imagined.

That September of 2005, during a school holiday, I walked to my house to bring some food. As I reached my home, I realized that the Maoists had organized a programme at my old school. The Maoists had demanded that each family should send one family member to their programme under the one-family/one member campaign. I had to go there because my parents were not at home. They had gone to the market. After the programme, the Maoists told me that I needed to go with them for seven days.

During that time, they gave me an orientation to the Maoist party. Seven days passed but they did not talk about sending me home. When I said that I wanted to go home, they said "You'll have to come with us forever". I said, "What is the use of small people like me in this party?" But they said, "Small people will one day become big people." I told them, "I'm of the age for studying, and not of the age to go with you." But they did not agree to that. At that time, I did not know that children had rights and that recruiting a 13-year-old was a crime. I did not have a choice, so I followed them.

There were many other children my age who were brought forcefully or who had been coerced or enticed with promises. They would not give us food on time, and there were many children like me who wanted to go home. They would not give us clothes, and we would only receive NPR50 — or $0.75 a month — for our toiletries. We had to buy undergarments, toothpaste and toothbrushes with that money.

Although we were small, we had to work very hard. The Maoists were organizing a campaign to win the villagers' trust and would construct roads and trenches and till land. I had to help with this work. To construct roads, I would carry heavy loads of boulders and stones and help dig the roads. We would walk from one district to another, often at night, in groups of 50 to 60 people, through the jungle, for more than 12 to 14 hours at a stretch. I would get so tired I felt I was dead. I couldn't sleep, and sometimes I would cry a lot. But there was no one for me to talk to or to help or protect me.

For a few days, we would stay in one of the hilly districts or a district in the southern plains and work for villagers, as instructed by the party. We would stay and eat in some of the villagers' homes. In one of the districts, the Party did not have a good reputation and so we had to move through that place quickly. In other districts, we would stay longer — up to a month. I was always afraid because we had to hide from the army and make sure they did not find us.

While I travelled from one place to another, I saw many other children going to school. That made me very sad. I would think that if I were at home I would be going to school, too. I made friends who were my age. We shared our emotions and our sadness, but there was no hope for us. My life had become sad and painful. I missed my parents a lot and I wanted to run away from there.

After travelling for almost 12 months, we returned to my home district. By this time, it was October 2006 and I was 14 years old. I had not talked to my family in a year. They knew I was with the Maoists but did not know where I was. They could not come for me because they were afraid of the repercussions that all of us might face. When we came back to my district, I really wanted to go home. But what could I do? I was scared that if the Nepalese Army saw me, they would kill me or my parents. Our neighbour was a commander with the Maoists, and I was scared that if I went home the Maoists would again find me and take me back. There was no way to escape. When I asked some of my friends if they wanted to go home, they would say, "Who does not want to go home? But there is nothing for us at home. Now we have to live and die here."

But I took a risk and secretly sent a letter to my mother. I told her where I was and asked her to come and bring me back home. Despite the risks, my mother and sister found me and took me back to my village. The Maoists did not prevent me from leaving but they terrified us with their threats. They said, "We will find you again and we can do whatever we want to if we find you again." I went back to my village, but I never stopped worrying for me and my family. I went back to school and, after a month, the Maoists held another recruitment campaign and took students from different schools to participate. My school was requested to send seven children to the programme. I was one of them and so I was taken again.

They made us walk to another district on an empty stomach. When we arrived, they made us go in small groups of three to four people to people's homes and ask for food and lodging. One woman did not have food for herself and her family, but she feared us and gave the corn that she had set aside for seed. I had only one set of clothes and I would wear them for 10 to 11 days. Sometimes I would exchange clothes with others in the Party.

By the time I had been with the Maoists for around 15 months, they enrolled me in their training programme. We would dig tunnels and crawl through them, and sometimes we had to jump to the ground from a height of 10 feet. Holding our weapons and gear, we had to climb ropes. They trained me to use .303 British rifles, INSAS rifles, single-loading rifles and AK-47s. They also taught us how to make and detonate bombs. We had to wear shorts and short-sleeved shirts and do leopard crawls during training, and my skin had cuts, scabs and bruises. I was still a little girl of only 14, and my body was hardly fit for such intense training. I started developing symptoms and problems in my heart and throat.

Out of 160 people in my training, I finished in second place. After the training, many of my friends ran away, but some of us just could not. Since I graduated second, they made me the commander over seven people. It was my turn to train other children. Many people were forced to marry others within the Party. This was a way to ensure that they would stay with the Party. I did not want to marry, and I was beaten up several times for that. In the meantime, I had become section vice-commander and my responsibilities had increased. Days passed and I started to accept my fate and to understand that this life had become my life. I felt sad, damaged and hopeless.

One day I fainted. One of my senior commanders said that I was faking to avoid working and carrying arms. I was very angry and went to another commander. In a very angry voice, I told him what had happened to me and that I needed medical attention. I said that if they could not give it to me, then I needed to go home. The commander told me that I had violated the rules by approaching him and asking to be relieved of my duties and go home. To punish me, they demoted me and made me work as a cook for six months. After six months, I asked for a leave and they granted it. I stayed home for 10 to 11 days, but I could not stay in the village longer. Villagers treated me badly, bullied me and talked behind my back. So I returned to the Maoists.

Within the Party, I had many friends who had not returned home in more than one or two years. Many of my friends had died fighting and many had become disabled while fighting. Most of us were weak. At times during the war, we would not be able to eat for an entire week. Sometimes we survived on water and corn flour. Some of my close friends who had been in combat told me that it was always the youngest who were sent to the front line and that the commanders gave orders from behind. I had not been sent to the front line yet, since I had not completed the combat training. Luckily, after I was trained and they were planning to send me to the next round of active fighting, the peace agreement was signed and I did not have to fight.

After the peace agreement was signed, people from the Maoist Party were gathered into cantonments and there was talk of a registration and verification process. The United Nations had been called in, and many of us went into the first registration that it conducted. I was one of them. The Maoists constructed seven cantonments across Nepal.

At that time, the senior commanders used to tell me, "You are a commander. You need to have more patience and you need to look after your members." They also used to give me medicine, saying that it would cure my heart and throat problems. They would also tell me that my heart and throat problems would go away if I got married. But I still did not want to, so they continued to harass and threaten me. Because of my hard work, they made me a section commander. I think they also thought that if I was promoted, I would be more inclined to get married. Time passed and my health worsened. I managed to tell my sister and uncle. So one day they came, and without asking any of the commanders, I just left the camp.

In May 2007, I returned home. I was 15 years old. I was very happy, but I was also scared. I was afraid that the Party would take me again or that the army would kill me if they found out who I was. In the village, everyone continued to show suspicion towards me and to talk behind my back. My parents could no longer send me to school, and I had to leave. I went to the nearest city, where I worked as a housemaid.

One day, I received a call from my sister saying that someone who worked with children affected by armed conflict had come to our home. She said they would help children like me. So I came home and met with them. They convinced me to go back to school, although I was shy about returning to the sixth grade. I started my education again. Meanwhile, the Maoists continued to threaten me. I had to stay at my uncle's house to hide from them, but they would not leave me alone. They came to his home and asked me to come along with them. I was always scared.

Finally, one person who worked for human rights intervened and helped me formally seek release from the Maoist Party. Then it became easier for me to stay in my village. Some of these organizations helped me readjust to life and build relationships with members of the community. Now I am well respected in my community and my school, and I regularly participate in and lead child rights-related programmes in my school and village. Now I also have friends, and children like to play with me and talk to me.

Since my family was poor, some organizations helped us to generate income. Today, I raise a little livestock. They also paid for my throat surgery. They helped me form a children's club which advocates for children's rights and on HIV issues. I am the president of the club, which counts 40 children among its members. Now, I have a new life.

Not long ago, I heard through the radio that there was a formal discharge process for children who remained in the cantonments. I am happy that they will now have a chance to choose what they want to do with their lives. But I also feel sad for them because I have been through the challenges they will now have to face.

I truly thank the Security Council for listening to my story, for it is the story of hundreds of Nepalese children. Thanks to the help and trust of the United Nations, including UNICEF and local organizations, some of us have been able to recover. I am one of them. I am very happy now. I am in the ninth grade at the school in my village, and I still dream of becoming a teacher.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Ms. Gurung for having been kind enough to share her experience with us. I would also like to note the courage of this young girl, who has described very clearly today the tragedy of the situation of children in armed conflict. I believe that this should be a source for inspiration to all us to continue to strengthen the work of the United Nations in this area.

With the Council's permission, I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

I am grateful for this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of my country to the full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law. Mexico today reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the full protection of civilians in armed conflicts, in particular women and children.

Mexico is convinced that we have made substantive progress in the Security Council's treatment of the promotion and protection of children affected by armed conflict. The adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), which strengthens and broadens the United Nations mechanisms for protecting minors in cases of armed conflict, is an example of this progress.

In thanking Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for presenting the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), I note that this year the annexes to the report include the names not only of those who recruit or use children in armed conflict, but also of those who commit criminal acts against them. While these are important steps, there is still much to do if we truly want to spare children from being the principal victims of the spiral of violence generated by armed conflicts around the world.

In the past two decades alone, more than 2 million children in areas of armed conflict have died, another six million have been disabled, more than a quarter of a million young people have been exploited as child soldiers in different regions of the world, and thousands more have been victims of sexual exploitation, rape and prostitution.

These figures are heartbreaking, but they say very little about the personal and direct suffering of the children involved. That is why, very personally but also on behalf of Mexico and the Security Council, I should like to commend the courage and testimony of Manju

Gurung, this former child soldier who has urged us to act decisively for children in situations of armed conflict.

Mexico also appeals to the Security Council to continue, within the framework of its competences, to address the repercussions of armed conflicts on children, and to promote concrete action to comply with the recommendations of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

My country vigorously defends the principle of the higher interests of children, and believes that we must step up our efforts as a community to provide broad and effective protection to children. Crimes committed against children cannot be stopped if their perpetrators remain unpunished. Serious violations of fundamental principles and norms of international humanitarian law are war crimes, and Members States have the primary obligation to investigate and prosecute those responsible for such violations. We support the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General that the Council consider stronger measures against those who persist in violating the rights of children in armed conflict.

Transparency and accountability in the protection of children in armed conflict have become crucial priorities. In cases where States have neither the capacity nor the willingness to prosecute those presumed responsible for these crimes, the International Criminal Court has the power to recognize those crimes that are stipulated in the Rome Statute.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Mexico has resolutely joined the campaign for ratification of the Protocols. We call upon States that have not already done so to ratify those and other instruments designed to ensure the greatest protection for those who today are affected by the scourge of war, exploitation and violence. Mexico will continue to guide the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict inclusively and with determination and transparency until the end of its mandate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

We would like to focus on five aspects: first, strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism to guarantee the provision of objective and verifiable information that will permit timely action by the United Nations system and follow-up to the recommendations of the Working Group; secondly, promoting the implementation of action plans aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children and crimes perpetrated against them; thirdly, improving the impact of our decisions on the comprehensive protection of children, including open meetings for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to present her reports; fourthly, ensuring that our recommendations promote full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights by all parties to a conflict; and finally, supporting the establishment of comprehensive programmes to rehabilitate and reintegrate children in the ranks of armed groups into their families and communities, as well as preventing new violations and abuses against them.

Close international cooperation on all these issues is crucial to providing comprehensive and sustainable solutions that meet the needs of children in situations of violence and armed conflict. This task requires the commitment of us all, as well as our coordinated efforts with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF, United Nations agencies and programmes, and civil society organizations. Protecting the most vulnerable is not only an ethical imperative; today, protecting our children, who should never take any part in any armed conflict, is also protecting our nations, whose strengths, deepest values and hopes are embodied in those children. I thank the Council for its support in favour of a better world for the children of our planet.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I support the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union. I would like to thank the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico for taking the initiative to convene the Security Council to address the issue of children and armed conflict. We welcome the Council's sending of an unmistakable message to parties who continue to violate the rights of children in armed conflict. If parties to a conflict refuse to take the path of dialogue and do not implement action plans in spite of the repeated appeals of the Security Council to do so, we should not hesitate when considering targeted and strong sanctions against them.

The mechanism set up in the draft presidential statement to be adopted today aims at greater integration of the protection of children in armed conflict into the work of the sanctions committees. In this respect, we invite Ms. Coomaraswamy to begin direct dialogue with the committee experts without delay.

In the absence of a sanctions committee or when it would take too long to establish one, the Security Council can act directly, when necessary, through a resolution adopted under Chapter VII. In that respect, the responsiveness of our Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should be improved. Beyond implementing sanctions, we agree with the analysis and recommendations developed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2010/181) to put an end to the heinous acts referred to therein and to ensure that their perpetrators are brought to justice. In this respect, we welcome the actions of the International Criminal Court, among which the current war crimes trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo is a prime example.

Since its creation five years ago, the Working Group has focused on the recruitment and use of child soldiers and has achieved results contributing to the release of tens of thousands of children. However, we remain in the implementation phase of resolution 1882 (2009), which added rape and other sexual violence, as well as killing and maiming contrary to international law, to the criteria for listing parties to conflict on the Secretary-General's naming-and-shaming list. In our view, this will require making more resources available to the Council's monitoring and reporting mechanism and to the implementation of action plans. It will also require taking better into account the cross-border dimension of some conflicts, including but not exclusively in Africa.

Finally, we believe that it would be desirable to give increased attention to attacks against educational facilities, which are increasing throughout the world, with a view to expanding the criteria for adding parties to conflict to the Secretary-General's naming-and-shaming list. We would like to see specific recommendations on this issue in the next report of the Secretary-General.

The work of our Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict will be marked by some important developments in the coming months. First, we will need to resolve the recurring question of its administrative support. Today, that job is wholly dependent on the goodwill of the Mexican Mission. We hope to see proposals from the Secretary-General on this issue in the coming weeks in order to relieve our Mexican friends of that duty. Next, the Working Group will have to undertake a country visit. We would be pleased for such a mission to take place by the end of the year.

Finally, the action plans will have to be implemented in the field. To that end, France will co-organize with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and its partners in the Steering Committee the third Ministerial Follow-up Forum to the Paris Commitments and Paris Principles on 27 September. It will focus on the financial commitment of the international community to ensure, inter alia, that children who are victims of violations benefit from care and adequate reintegration programmes.

I wish to conclude by affirming that France supports without reservation the campaign launched by the Secretary-General aimed at the universal ratification within two years of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We call on all States, as you have done, Madam Minister, that have not yet ratified this instrument to do so as soon as possible.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): My thanks go in particular to Special Representative Coomaraswamy for her thorough briefing and her passionate commitment to this cause. I would also like to thank UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Hilde Johnson and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Atul Khare for their very passionate and informative briefings. But I should like especially to thank Manju Gurung for her presence here and her statement to the Council. Her courage and her example are extraordinary, and all of us can only begin to imagine how difficult and daunting it must be to speak before a Council like this in a room like this. We wish her to know how much we admire her and how much we are here cheering for her and for a brighter, safer and more peaceful future. We wish her all the best.

The nineteenth century American abolitionist Frederick Douglass once said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." Two centuries later, we see the truth of that insight in country after country, in conflict after conflict. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181) makes painfully clear, children are abused and children's rights are violated in armed conflicts in many areas of the world. Even after such conflicts end, the scars remain. Children exposed to violence or trauma, especially prolonged trauma, are more likely to have their social, emotional and cognitive development impaired. And such ordeals inflict psychological damage that can endure for years to come.

The litany of abuses is grim: outright killing, maiming, forced participation in armed conflict, rape, sexual exploitation and other forms of sexual violence. Those outrages not only rob children of their innocence and limit their full and meaningful participation in their societies, but they also risk further stoking the very conflicts in which these children so gravely suffer. Parties that commit violations against children plunder the future of their countries and threaten international peace and security.

The United States fully and firmly embraces our responsibility to protect children, and we will not rest until the last abuse is halted and the last child soldier is released. We welcome the Secretary-General's report as an important tool to help us uphold that common responsibility. We are glad to note that for the first time the report's annexes include parties that have engaged in patterns of killing, maiming, raping and sexually abusing children in contravention of applicable international law.

We urge that all information on violations identified by the monitoring and reporting mechanism be thoroughly verified to ensure a high degree of accuracy. We agree with the report's recommendation to ensure that specific language on protecting children is placed in the mandates of both the relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations and those of political, humanitarian and peacebuilding missions. We also agree that, given the regional dimensions of some conflicts highlighted in the report, these missions should speed their development of strategies and coordination mechanisms for better information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection issues.

We support the Secretary-General's recommendation to include the unlawful recruitment or use of children as a listing criterion in appropriate Security Council sanctions regimes, and we strongly encourage closer cooperation and coordination among the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, these sanctions committees and their expert groups. As the Secretary-General suggests, such coordination would let us weigh the application of "more vigorous measures against persistent violators" (S/2010/181, para. 186) when that is appropriate.

We take heart from several instances in which parties and former parties to armed conflict have taken meaningful steps to protect children, from Afghanistan to Burundi and Nepal, often after strong encouragement from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Nevertheless, violations and abuses against children are endemic in far too many places. The United States is particularly concerned about the situation in Somalia. Active recruitment of child soldiers has placed several thousand children in the line of fire. We strongly condemn the use of child soldiers by any group, and we call on parties to the conflict in Somalia to immediately cease child recruitment and release those who remain within their ranks.

Equally, we continue to be gravely concerned over developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Virtually every party engaged in the conflict there actively and unlawfully recruits children. Hundreds of children were shoved into the ranks of combatants there last year. We particularly abhor the actions of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which makes a practice of forced recruitment through abduction.

The United States is also deeply disturbed by the situation in the Central African Republic, where the active and unlawful recruitment of children is so bad that, as the Secretary-General notes, children now comprise a full third of the total self-defence militias and where the LRA continues its reprehensible acts.

We do see some hard-won progress, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Special Representative Coomaraswamy, as well as moves towards mainstreaming this issue across the whole of the United Nations system. But the grievous examples of violations and abuses against children — whether in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia or a number of other places — remind us that the pace of progress is too slow for too many children. Much more work must be done, and we have no time to spare.

The United States will remain fully and deeply dedicated to preventing the violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict. We will continue to strongly support the efforts of the United Nations and our many non-governmental organization partners. We look forward to continuing to work closely with our fellow Security Council members on this vital issue. We are grateful to those who organized today's important debate, but we hope that the day will soon come when such meetings will no longer be needed.

One child harmed as the result of armed conflict is one child too many, and the only morally tolerable number of child soldiers is zero.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): At the outset, I should like to welcome you, Madam President, and to thank you and your delegation for the commitment shown in this very important matter. I should also like to thank Ambassador Heller and the Mission here for their excellent work in preparing for this important debate.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be made later on behalf of the European Union. As a member of the Human Security Network, as well as of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, Austria also supports the joint statement of the Network to be delivered by Costa Rica and the first-ever joint statement of the Group of Friends, to be delivered by Canada.

I should like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy, Deputy Executive Director Johnson and Assistant Secretary-General Khare for their presentations. We greatly appreciate the work of the Special Representative and of all of those who contribute to implementing the children and armed conflict agenda within the Secretariat and UNICEF.

My delegation and I personally also wish to extend a warm welcome and a word of thanks to Ms. Manju Gurung from Nepal. We thank her for having shared her thoughts and her very moving experiences, which serve as a stark reminder of why we are here today. In this context and in view of what she said, we welcome the signing of an action plan by the parties in Nepal and the swift completion of the discharge process. The successful mission of Special Representative Coomaraswamy to Nepal last December underlines the importance of her field visits for effective follow-up on the recommendations of the Security Council and its Working Group.

Progress has also been made in the past year in other parts of the world also, as set out in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report (S/2010/181). We welcome the signing of action plans to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children with parties in the Philippines and the Sudan, as well as the positive developments in Burundi, which allowed for the de-listing of the armed groups formerly listed under that country situation.

At the same time, the fact that parties to armed conflicts have continued to commit grave violations and abuses against children in conflict situations around the world is deeply worrying. We take note of new listings of parties that recruit and use children and engage in patterns of killing and maiming or sexual violence. We call on all parties listed in the annexes immediately to halt those violations and to prepare and implement concrete, time-bound action plans to ensure the effective protection of children. We agree with the Secretary-General that direct contact between the United Nations country teams and non-State actors is important in this context. We therefore support his call on Member States to allow for such contacts in the framework of resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009).

The reported increase in attacks against schools — to which others have already referred — as well as against teachers and students, and the specific targeting of girl students in certain country situations constitute a deeply worrying development. We strongly condemn such heinous acts, which violate international humanitarian law and deprive the children concerned of any meaningful prospects for a better future.

We wish to acknowledge the detailed information provided in the Secretary-General's report on the criteria and procedures used for listing and de-listing parties to armed conflict, as well as on the ongoing development of templates for action plans to address and prevent patterns of killing and maiming and/or rape and other sexual violence against children. We agree with the Secretary-General's understanding of the notion of a "pattern", which involves a "multiple commission of acts being perpetrated in the same context" (see S/2010/181, para. 175), but we also wish to stress that, from our point of view, this should not necessarily imply a high quantitative threshold.

With the introduction of new listing criteria in resolution 1882 (2009) the provision of timely, accurate, reliable and verifiable information to the Council, and thus an increased monitoring and reporting capacity of the United Nations system, has become even more important. We call, therefore, on all relevant United Nations entities to cooperate and coordinate in order to create synergies and to allow for the systematic exchange of information. We also believe that in certain situations — such as the case of the Lord's Resistance Army — regional cooperation among United Nations actors in the field needs to be strengthened.

The report of the Secretary-General rightly draws our attention to those parties to conflict that continue to commit crimes against children despite repeated calls of the Council. The Council must be determined to ensure respect for its resolutions, and it needs to be prepared to take vigorous measures against persistent perpetrators.

In order to increase the coherence of the Council's work, provisions pertaining to violations of international law committed against children should be included in the mandates of the relevant sanctions committees. Interaction of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict with sanctions committees and their expert groups should be enhanced. The recent briefing by Special Representative Coomaraswamy to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which included provision of specific information on individuals recruiting and using children, was an important first step that will enable the Committee to take action. In this context, we also support the Secretary-General's recommendation to incorporate child protection expertise in sanctions committees' expert groups. At the same time, the Council must also consider specific recommendations from its Working Group on parties committing violations and abuses against children, in order to take direct action in particularly serious situations where no sanctions committee is in place.

We welcome the fact that the presidential statement to be adopted at the end of this debate addresses these issues in a forward-looking manner.

In closing, let me express my country's sincere appreciation for the excellent work that has been carried out by the Mexican Chair of the Working Group over the past one and a half years. The Group has been doing important work in developing concrete recommendations on various situations on the basis of country-specific reports of the Secretary-General and exchanges with the Member States concerned. In view of the considerable workload, as well as the urgent need to build up a historical memory — and here I am also repeating something that has already been said today — Austria strongly supports the repeated request to the Secretary-General to provide administrative support to the Group. This could also enable the Group further to improve its working methods and the follow-up of its conclusions and recommendations, as well as to proceed to a more effective use of its toolkit, in particular through the timely realization of a field visit.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I thank you, Madam Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, for organizing and presiding over this important debate on children and armed conflict. I also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, and Assistant Secretary-General Atul Khare for their statements. I welcome Ms. Manju Gurung and salute her for her courage and for sharing her experiences in a compelling account of the story of her life in conflict.

The issue of children in armed conflict has been an important subject on the agenda of the Security Council for 11 years now. Member States have consistently articulated the plight of children in armed conflict; they have reiterated their commitments to the well-being of children and pledged support for their protection, especially in situations of armed conflict.

It is essential that children in conflict situations be protected by the international community. We note with concern that in the annexes to the ninth annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), several armed groups associated with children are named. A number of these are in Africa. Not only do these groups recruit or abduct children, but in some cases, such as that of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), they also maim them, commit sexual violence against them or even kill them. They rob them of their freedom as well as their innocence.

Uganda calls upon all parties in situations of armed conflict to adhere to international normative instruments protecting educational facilities from attack. We strongly condemn wilful attacks against schools and other educational facilities, as well as the deliberate targeting of girls by armed groups. Uganda has had first-hand experience of attacks against schools, as well as of the abduction of students. In June 1998, 12 years ago, an armed group calling itself the Allied Democratic Front raided a technical college in western Uganda and burned 80 students alive in three dormitories. That armed group also abducted more than 100 students.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Uganda is a party to both Optional Protocols, and we encourage Member States that have not yet done so to consider acceding to, ratifying and domesticating them. It is important that the reports on implementation be prepared and submitted in a timely manner.

We note the call by the Secretary-General to parties listed in the annexes of the report to prepare and implement concrete and time-bound action plans to halt those violations. It is necessary for the Security Council to consider taking measures against any parties that fail to comply. We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, on the achievements she has made in finalizing action plans with parties to conflicts in four countries and encourage her to maintain the momentum.

We also note the Secretary-General's recommendation to allow contact between the United Nations and non-State actors to ensure the broad and effective protection of children. We regard that as a positive recommendation. The spirit of that recommendation is positive, but it is important to take into account the specific conditions that may prevail on the ground.

Uganda notes the recommendation of the Secretary-General that stronger measures be taken against persistent violators who have been listed for grave violations against children in his annual reports for at least five years. It is also clear that the United Nations is at different stages of engagement with the various parties on the lists, including the negotiation of action plans. Notwithstanding the five-year timeline, Uganda encourages a broader set of conditions that would necessitate action by the Council against persistent perpetrators.

Uganda emphasizes the importance of urging relevant actors in peace processes to ensure that the concerns and needs of children in armed conflict are consistently taken into account. Given the regional dimensions of some conflicts, it is essential that relevant Member States, United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams accelerate the development of appropriate strategies and coordination mechanisms. That is necessary for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection concerns.

Uganda is convinced that this debate should further galvanize our collective efforts to protect children in situations of armed conflict. Children everywhere have the right to live in conditions that provide an opportunity for a bright and successful future. We therefore highly commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and her staff on the work that they are doing in that direction.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): I warmly welcome you, Madam President, as Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico presiding over the Council today. I also thank you for the comprehensive observations that you have made. Allow me to extend to the delegation of Mexico our most sincere congratulations on its work under the leadership of Ambassador Heller as the Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and on its efforts to prepare the draft presidential statement that we are going to adopt today.

Let me thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her briefing, and the other briefers — Ms. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF; Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; and Ms. Manju Gurung.

Children are faced with appalling forms of abuse and violence every day in different parts of the world.

They are reported to be forcibly abducted and recruited as militants. Children are also victims of sexual trafficking, and girls in particular face sexual violence. Many children do not have access to education or basic health care during armed conflicts. We must reverse that trend and protect children at all costs, and the Council plays an imperative role in that regard.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) provides us with very useful information for ending all violations and abuses committed against children. We take note of his observations and support his recommendations. We welcome the attention focused on persistent violators.

Important progress has been made over the past year, and we welcome the adoption of resolution 1882 (2009) and the expansion of the triggers for listing to include the killing and maiming of children, as well rape and other sexual violence. Human rights violations committed against children cannot and will not be tolerated. Therefore, we believe that the protection of children is part of the collective cultural values of humanity.

Our aim in the Council for the better protection of children is stronger child protection frameworks. We must continue our collective efforts to that end. Turkey also believes in the importance of investigating, prosecuting and punishing all those who commit grave violations against children. We would also like to emphasize our grave concern about the increased number of attacks on education facilities, schools and pupils. Since education is the future of new generations, the Security Council should address the problem in its future deliberations.

While working to achieve our goals, we believe that three points should always be kept in mind. First, States must be encouraged at every stage to cooperate with the Working Group. Secondly, the work of the Group should be expedited and facilitated in order to cover more situations. Thirdly, we should give priority to the implementation of United Nations documents first.

On that last point, Turkey strongly supports each United Nations instrument and initiative related to the rights of children. We show our dedication and sensitivity to the issue of violations against children by being party to every relevant United Nations instrument. Needless to say, these United Nations instruments have become a fundamental part of Turkey's legislation. We are party to various instruments promoting the rights of children outside the framework of the United Nations. Our first priority should be to recruit every country to support and ensure the implementation of all United Nations conventions and protocols.

Children comprise almost one-third of our population. They are our future. We have to unite for their future. We should act against persistent violators of their rights to free them from the devastating effects of armed conflicts. The Security Council should not refrain from taking the essential steps to stop violations against children and to fulfil our responsibility to protect our children.

Turkey is committed to contributing to all efforts in order to halt persistent perpetrators of crimes against children, and we call all Member States to be active on the issue.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Madam President, for your presence here to preside over this important debate. I also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the other speakers, Mr. Khare and Ms. Johnson, for their briefings. We underscore the courage of Ms. Manju Gurung and thank her for her testimony, which puts a human face on the violations and crimes we are discussing today.

Children's right to life, security, health care and education continues to be violated by armed conflict. The lost childhood of such children is a threat to the peace and security of the societies to which they belong and prevents them from building prosperous nations that respect international law.

In our region, a just and lasting peace cannot be established while ongoing and constant threats to the physical security of our children persist. These threats include the cluster bombs that Israel has placed in Lebanon and Gaza, which continue to maim our children. The Gaza embargo also continues to have devastating consequences for our children, who comprise 45 per cent of the population there.

Resolution 1882 (2009) represents critical progress in the protection of children because it introduces two new criteria — sexual violence and killing and maiming — for listing parties to armed conflict in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual reports. Even so, Lebanon believes that the six serious violations enumerated in resolution 1612 (2005) are all of equal gravity and should be accorded the same attention by the Working Group. We hope that one day the criteria for listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports will be extended to those six violations; failure to do so would be tantamount to silence concerning the heinous crimes perpetrated against thousands of children. No measure to address grave violations should be limited to post-conflict symptoms; any such measure must be part of a strategy to prevent conflict and address the underlying causes of emergent conflicts.

The protection of children should also be reflected in the Security Council's resolutions concerning specific countries. In this case, we welcome the adoption by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the guidelines on the protection of children. Like the Secretary-General, we reaffirm the importance of deploying child protection advisers in missions. We encourage the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to design a predictable and stable financing structure that would ensure the resources necessary to implementing the action plans. We also urge donors to provide the necessary funding to national Governments, the United Nations and its partners in order to ensure the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been associated with armed forces or groups.

Twelve years ago, the Security Council considered the topic of children and armed conflict for the first time. We have come a long way since then and achieved some progress. However, much remains to be done. First, we believe it imperative that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict respond swiftly to urgent or sudden situations in which children are affected on a large scale. Secondly, we underscore the importance of appeals for a more effective follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group. In his report (S/2010/181), the Secretary-General notes that impunity remains prevalent and that the prosecution of parties to conflicts listed in the annexes of his reports is still rare. That is why the various United Nations bodies must facilitate coordinated support to help national authorities to establish and maintain the rule of law at the national level. That would allow perpetrators to be held accountable for their actions — a decisive factor in protecting children.

The harmful psychosocial consequences of conflicts on the mental health of children and on stability and lasting peace in post-conflict societies cannot be ignored. Despite the efforts of the United Nations and relevant actors, gaps remain in the reintegration phase, especially in the psychosocial area. We therefore encourage the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, alongside national authorities, to jointly improve psychosocial support services to demobilized children and all children affected by armed conflict.

We have the ethical and moral responsibility to protect future generations from the scourge of armed conflict. We must focus our efforts on attenuating the emotional, physical and psychological impact on children who, with their well-being and often with their lives, daily pay the price of wars they have not chosen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate the representative of Lebanon on her excellent Spanish and thank her for making the effort to deliver her statement in my language.

Mr. Issoze-Ngondet (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation should like to a pay a special tribute, Madame, to your country, Mexico, for your interest in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Your country's outstanding chairmanship of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and your presence at today's debate clearly attest to that interest.

My delegation also thanks Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her exceptional introduction of the Secretary-General's ninth annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), and reaffirms our support for her efforts to promote the cause of children affected by the scourge of war. We also note the deeply moving testimony of Ms. Manju, a former child soldier, on the war in Nepal. It not only reminded us of the gravity and urgency of the phenomenon, but also encouraged us to listen to and involve children in the settlement of problems that concern them.

My delegation wishes to speak on the following three points: the impact on children of new forms of warfare, progress made, and challenges and prospects ahead.

New forms of armed conflict, marked by the growing involvement of non-State actors and non-traditional forms of combat, complicate the objective assessment of the impact of war on children. In addition to this there is the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the increase in armed groups, the emergence of resource wars and the internationalization of terrorism, which constantly fuel a culture of violence, especially against children.

In his periodic report on children and armed conflict in 2005 (S/2005/72), the Secretary-General identified six violations of the rights of children in conflict zones, namely, killing or maiming, the recruitment of child soldiers, attacks against schools or hospitals, rape or other forms of sexual violence, the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access for children. Gabon vigorously condemns these heinous and shameful practices, which offend morality and undermine human dignity.

One of the most significant achievements of the last ten years has been the recognition by the international community that political and diplomatic commitment is crucial in responding to the suffering of children affected by armed conflict. The Security Council played a decisive role in acknowledging, in resolution 1261 (1999), that the protection of children in armed conflict affects international peace and security. The many resolutions adopted since then by the Council and by the General Assembly on this matter bear witness to this. Thus, the problems linked to children are taken into account today in negotiations of peace agreements and in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

In adopting, in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005), a monitoring and reporting mechanism for countries at war and a working group on children in armed conflict, the Council wanted to have reliable and timely information on the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflicts, as well as on other violations of children's rights. Despite this progress, the international community has many challenges to overcome in this area. The reality on the ground remains very worrisome.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181) reveals that many national armies and armed groups continue to recruit and use children. Therefore we welcome the publication in the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General of the lists of those who violate the rights of children, which certainly constitutes progress towards possible legal proceedings against them.

My country is pleased by the fact that at a regional conference held in N'Djamena from 8 to 9 June 2010, the States of Central Africa adopted the N'Djamena Declaration reaffirming their commitment to put an end to the enrolment of children in armed conflict, with a view to strengthening peace and security and promoting development of the subregion, where there are more than 30,000 child soldiers.

The protection of children in armed conflict is a shared responsibility. Gabon considers relevant the recommendation of the Secretary-General to ensure that the question of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict could be examined at all levels of the Security Council's activities, including in the counter-terrorism committees.

That recommendation includes another proposal which urges the participation of experts on questions linked to the protection of children in all United Nations peace missions, including peacekeeping operations and political missions. It would also be wise for the Council to establish a sanctions committee on the violations of the rights of children affected by armed conflicts. Generally speaking, our action in fighting impunity with respect to violations of the rights of children will not be truly effective unless we increase our awareness campaigns with the goal of leading the largest number of leaders and individuals to accept and understand the validity of this struggle.

The presidential statement that we shall adopt at the end of this debate should lay the bases for a common ethic, the commitment of all of us — Governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations — to act together in the interest of the children of the entire world and of future generations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to you, Sir, for your initiative in holding today's meeting and to the Secretary-General for preparing the overview report (S/2010/181). We also thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Mr. Khare, Ms. Johnson and Ms. Gurung for their information.

Russia supports the call by the Secretary-General to give due attention to all serious violations of the rights of children in conflict. Crimes against children should not go unpunished. In this connection, we welcome the first practical steps for including in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report information on parties to conflict that are responsible for killing and injuring children and rape and other sexual abuse. However, we wish to stress the need to consider correctly the issue of including in the report information on specific country situations. In particular, we do not believe it is right to include in the current report several situations — specifically, India, Pakistan and Yemen — that cannot be called armed conflicts.

We firmly condemn premeditated attacks on civilians, including children, and the deadly, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, as described by the Secretary-General. Of particular concern for us is what the report mentions with regard to the increasing trend in the number of attacks by parties to conflicts on education facilities.

Russia condemns the grave violations of international humanitarian law during operation Cast Lead in Gaza, which took the lives of hundreds of children and destroyed schools. The statistics in the report cannot leave anyone indifferent. We once again call on parties to conflicts to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against civilian populations.

Children continue to be victims of conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, where armed groups attack the civilian population and carry out terrorist acts. It is important that Al-Qaida and the Taliban are once again included in the list of violators. Unfortunately, children in those countries are dying because of the actions of foreign forces that are supposed to defend them. We consider unjustified the attempts to describe deaths of children as collateral damage. That is also in line with the Geneva Conventions. We favour looking closely at such incidents and punishing those responsible.

We welcome the work of the United Nations missions and country teams aimed at getting parties to conflict to accept action plans to prevent and halt violations of the rights of children. However, contact with United Nations structures and non-State armed groups can take place only with the agreement of the Governments involved. Moreover, action plans are important instruments in protecting children and should not be seen as a goal in and of themselves. True improvements in the situation for children in the field is much more important for assessing progress than promises that exist on paper but are often not fulfilled.

The Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, led by France and later by Mexico, did a significant amount of work in developing recommendations on concrete situations. In order to effectively implement them, it is necessary to develop constructive cooperation with the concerned Governments.

We studied with interest the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report. We believe that most of them deserve close study and analysis, including from the point of view of practical application. In particular, we consider that an exchange of views on the criteria for qualifying parties to conflicts as persistent violators would be useful. We believe that a brief mention in the annexes to a report of the Secretary-General is insufficient in this context.

We are grateful to the delegation of Mexico for preparing the draft presidential statement that we will adopt today.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): It has been an honour for my delegation to have had the presence of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Her Excellency Patricia Espinosa, in the Council this morning. I thank you, Sir, and your delegation for the initiative in convening this important meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her outstanding work and her remarks today. We also thank the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for their statements.

I would like to give particular thanks to Manju for her vivid testimony about her experience as a child soldier in Nepal. I commend her for her courage and determination. It is disturbing that such experiences are repeated day after day for thousands of children around the world.

The case for the protection of children in armed conflict is morally compelling. In cases where it involves a threat to international peace and security, the Security Council must take action to prevent and halt violence against children.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) demonstrates the success of the work that

Ms. Coomaraswamy's office has been carrying out in conjunction with other actors, such as UNICEF. The release of children associated with armed groups in several countries, as described in the report, is cause for genuine celebration. The signing of action plans with groups in the Philippines, the Sudan and Nepal is also worthy of recognition. At the same time, the numerous instances in which violations continue unabated are a sobering reminder that much remains to be done.

Monitoring violations and gathering accurate information remains a challenge. Close coordination with local authorities and other relevant actors is key. It is also important to identify and compile best practices in this field and to consolidate the methodology for collecting data, particularly with regard to sexual violence, where the greatest challenges lie.

Another source of concern is the issue of accountability relating to crimes against children. Improvements in this area require strong support by means of technical assistance and capacity-building. It may be worth considering ways by which multilateral organizations and governments can cooperate with interested States in that regard. That would be particularly relevant in those cases where shortcomings are due mostly to lack of funding, expertise or judicial structures.

The Council and the Working Group should bear in mind social and economic conditions affecting children in armed conflict. In many situations poverty and social injustice, although never a justification for violations and abuses against children, make them more likely. The Working Group could make recommendations regarding specific socio-economic conditions affecting child protection in the context of armed conflict.

Where there is a peacekeeping operation on the ground, child protection should be integrated into the mission-wide protection strategies called for in resolution 1894 (2009), as happens in many cases. Those strategies can include plans to effectively protect educational facilities and to build capacity so that community leaders can help identify, as early as possible, attempts by armed groups to recruit or harass children.

I would like to make two brief points on the functioning of the Working Group. First and foremost, it is imperative that it be provided with sufficient administrative support by the Secretariat, as has been repeatedly requested. We are especially concerned with the preservation of the Group's institutional memory, which is particularly necessary for the elected members to adequately participate in its work. Secondly, we would support efforts to ensure that the Working Group is able to deal in a timely fashion with the numerous situations on its agenda.

In closing, I wish to reiterate my Government's commitment to the protection of children in all situations, not only through the action of the Security Council, where violations may affect peace and security, but also through the United Nations agencies, funds and programs and through bilateral cooperation.

Mr. Barbalić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, and Her Excellency Ms. Patricia Espinosa Cantellano for convening this debate, thus showing that Mexico attaches special interest to the issue of children in armed conflict. As a country with critical experience, Bosnia and Herzegovina feels particularly strongly about this topic, and we consider that giving high priority to protection of children in armed conflict is of vital importance. I would like to reiterate Bosnia and Herzegovina's appreciation for Mexico's tireless efforts and for chairing the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Allow me also to express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Atul Khare, and the Deputy Director of UNICEF, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, for their briefings. We are grateful to Manju Gurung for sharing her story with us today. We really feel and respect her courage, and I believe we all heard very important messages that we have to consider in future.

Bosnia and Herzegovina highly appreciates and supports the work of Ms. Coomaraswamy, whose outreach activities and field visits contributed significantly to improving the situation of children in armed conflict. The pragmatic and cooperative approach, with a humanitarian emphasis aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed to and affected by conflict in situations of concern, is of key importance.

We also align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union later today.

Bosnia and Herzegovina takes positive note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) and the recommendations contained therein. Significant progress has been made with regard to the signing of action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to secure their release from armed forces and groups.

We are encouraged by the fact that some parties to armed conflict have made progress in releasing child soldiers. Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned that the practice of recruiting and using children has continued in the past year. While stressing the primary role of national Governments in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflicts, we urge all parties to conflicts to fully comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law with regard to protecting the civilian population. All countries and groups must place the protection of children in situations of armed conflict above politics.

Furthermore, we urge the parties to conflict listed in the annexes in the Secretary-General's report to engage in constructive dialogue in order to prepare and implement the time-bound action plans to stop recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children and killing and maiming of children. This process should be conducted through efficient coordination among different actors in the field, including the host Government, United Nations entities, donors and non-governmental organizations.

We would encourage donors to ensure sufficient, timely and adequate funding for the implementation of action plans. In this context, education packages and access with regard to basic needs such as nutrition, health and water, as well as psychological support for reintegration of child soldiers into their families and communities, should be ensured and all barriers to access removed.

Recognizing the important role of education, we are deeply concerned about the growing number of attacks against schools, educational facilities, teachers and pupils. In times of conflict all steps should be taken to safeguard the right to education. All parties to conflict should keep schools as protected areas and zones of peace for boys and girls.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers that targeted, gradual and more vigorous measures against those groups and individuals who persistently commit grave violations against children should be undertaken. In order to end impunity for violations against children, Member States must uphold existing international standards and operationalize their obligations through accelerated national legislative reform and systematic implementation and monitoring. Perpetrators should be brought to justice in compliance with international justice mechanisms, criminal courts and tribunals.

The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups advocate a comprehensive approach to reintegrating children into their communities. Including children in peacebuilding activities is one of the key elements of each peacebuilding strategy. Special attention should be given to refugee and displaced children, children with disabilities and those who have been subjected to sexual violence. We believe that their participation in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes is critical. It is of utmost importance to continue including specific provisions for the protection of children in the mandates of all relevant United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions; Child Protection Advisers should be deployed in those missions.

Many positive developments with regard to monitoring and reporting have been seen since the adoption of resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005). However, much more remains to be done. We are of the view that the monitoring and reporting system should be strengthened and its capacities developed for effective and timely response to all violations and abuses committed against children, in particular with regard to collecting reliable and verifiable information on acts of rape and acts of sexual violence. It is crucial that country task forces on monitoring and reporting follow up developments and the implementation of recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Cooperation and exchange of information between the Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict and relevant sanctions committees should be improved. Sanctions committees should consider inviting the Office of the Special Representative, as was the case in May with regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to brief them more regularly on specific recommendations in the Secretary-General's reports. We believe that such cooperation can add value to the efforts of the Working Group and, at the same time, contribute significantly towards more efficient use of the Working Group's recommendations.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the adoption by the Security Council of an action-oriented presidential statement, convinced that more positive examples will follow.

Mr. Lolo (Nigeria): Madam President, let me join others in welcoming you to this debate and in thanking you for your leadership. Also, let me commend your country for the choice of topic for our discussion today.

I should like in addition to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her tireless efforts and her contribution to the task of protecting the rights and welfare of children. The growing culture of cooperation on this issue between State actors, the United Nations and other relevant agencies is a credit to Ms. Coomaraswamy's leadership. Working together to devise and implement time-bound action plans for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, these actors make an important contribution to the task of protecting the rights and welfare of that vulnerable group.

Children are not only victims of armed conflicts; they also suffer the worst effects of their debilitating consequences. Defenceless and powerless, children are killed and maimed and are used and abused in these situations, as we heard this morning in the compelling account of Ms. Manju Gurung. We commend her for her courage in telling her story before the Security Council.

Where they survive, their future is often marked by neglect, rejection and even ostracism. We are convinced that, so long as there is armed conflict, the international community must take appropriate measures to protect the most vulnerable groups, of which children constitute a significant component. Our interventions must aim at preventing their involvement or use in armed conflicts in violation of international law.

One cannot overstate the need for the Council to continue to pay attention to the issue of children and armed conflict. Indeed, over the past decade the Council has demonstrated its commitment to improving the plight of such children, beginning with its landmark resolution 1261 (1999) and most recently through resolution 1882 (2009). Resolution 1621 (2005), which created the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, provides another key mechanism that has allowed the Council to give practical expression to the protection of children in armed conflict.

We are pleased that resolution 1882 (2009) has extended the reach of the Secretary-General's reporting framework to cover additional violations and to address conflict situations not on the Council's agenda. That resolution also broadened the conceptual scope of the issue to include killing, maiming and rape and other sexual violence inflicted on children in these circumstances. Fittingly, the issue of children and armed conflict has become more deeply embedded in the business of the Council.

We applaud the progress that has been achieved in the adoption of appropriate instruments and the establishment of relevant institutional frameworks related to children and armed conflict. Those countries that have willingly submitted themselves to United Nations support and strategies are to be commended. In addition, the N'Djamena Declaration on child soldiers, signed last week by Nigeria and five other countries, demonstrates the commitment to tackling this issue.

While these successes should be recognized, it is clear that much work remains to be done. Nigeria is concerned that persistent violators cited in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports for at least five years have not received the Council's attention with a view to ensuring their accountability.

In our view, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should be encouraged to continue to monitor, assess, consult and report objectively on the range of issues affecting children in armed conflict. The Council should take steps to ensure that substantive administrative support is provided to the Working Group to enhance its capacity to discharge its mandate. There is also need for coordination among the Working Group, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees to ensure that the recommendations of the sanctions committees adequately respond to the protection imperatives of armed conflicts.

For its part, the Council should be seen to facilitate progress. It should be more responsive to the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group, and it should use its considerable authority to ensure that violators of children in armed conflict are held to account.

As a troop-contributing country, Nigeria supports the inclusion of specific provisions for the protection of children in the mandates of all United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. We also support the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to develop and implement appropriate training programmes and material for all United Nations peacekeepers. Support should also be given for the integration of this successful strategy into the work of the Department of Political Affairs in its political missions. We believe that this will not only prepare the missions to better handle child-specific issues that are inevitable in conflict and post-conflict situations, but will also help to establish best practices for emulation by the international community.

We welcome the Secretary-General's suggestion to make the provision of peacekeeping support to national forces that may be committing serious human rights violations conditional on compliance with international law. We hope that this will propel the integration of child protection measures into all medium- and long-term peacekeeping and peacebuilding strategies.

The Council should continue to send a strong a clear warning that abuses and violations against children in armed conflict situations will not go unpunished.

Finally, we endorse the draft presidential statement to be issued at the end of this debate.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): Madam President, I would like to join other speakers in thanking you for organizing today's important debate. Mexico has given outstanding leadership on this issue in the Security Council, as demonstrated by your presence today. We greatly appreciate that. I would also like to thank Hilde Frafjord Johnson and Atul Khare for their interventions and to thank in particular Manju Gurung for her powerful and moving testimony. I commend Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her efforts. It is her commitment and leadership that have led to much of the progress we have made on the protection of children over the past year.

And there has been progress. Without the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, more than 350 children in Burundi would not now be with their families. Such success underlines the difference that we collectively can make. But where systematic and persistent violations continue, we must make every effort to bring those violations to a swift end. I would like to focus on three points.

First, the United Kingdom firmly believes that the greatest impact on the lives of children in armed conflict can be made through the implementation of country action plans. We welcome the new action plans in the Sudan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, as well as the new country task forces for monitoring and reporting, notably in Afghanistan. In the Sudan, the United Kingdom will work alongside others to implement security sector reform in Southern Sudan to help the Sudan People's Liberation Army develop as an accountable and disciplined body operating with respect for human rights. In Sri Lanka, we were heartened to see the recent release of all registered child soldiers. The United Kingdom supports UNICEF's vital work in ending the recruitment of children in Sri Lanka and in facilitating the release and reintegration of former child soldiers.

Non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations have also contributed greatly to information-gathering on children and armed conflict. We urge all those parties that have signed national action plans to honour their commitments and redouble their efforts. Those yet to sign must engage with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and commit to ending violations against children.

Secondly, as the Security Council acknowledged in resolution 1882 (2009), children are subject not just to recruitment, but also to killing and maiming and rape and other sexual violence. The Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) contains valuable analysis of these abhorrent violations. Reporting and follow-up action should be further strengthened. We are particularly concerned about attacks on education, which are mentioned in the report. The country task forces should enhance monitoring and reporting in that particular area. Children must be able to learn, and teachers must be able to teach, free from the threat of rape or sexual violence.

Thirdly, we must make better use of the reporting we receive here at the Council. The Security Council Working Group should produce conclusions that are robust and timely and that hold violators to account.

It is clear that, although there has been progress, many challenges remain. As we know, many children's lives remain at risk from conflict on a daily basis. In Burma, the conflict continues to place children in grave danger. We urge all parties to allow full access to the United Nations task force and the International Labour Organization. While we welcome the Government of Burma's establishment of a committee to prevent military recruitment of under-age children, still greater efforts are needed to ensure that officers and communities are aware of the law on the recruitment of children and that complaints and cases are investigated.

The United Kingdom remains committed to tackling the issue of children and armed conflict. We will continue to work with our partners in the international community to create a safer environment for children around the world. Today's draft presidential statement gives us a good basis from which to do so, and we strongly support it.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting. I should also like to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms. Manju Gurung, a child from Nepal, for their briefings.

China attaches importance to the issue of children and armed conflict. We condemn and oppose the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other violations of children's rights in armed conflict. We support the efforts of the United Nations, including the Security Council, to promote the protection of children in armed conflict. In that regard, I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, in order to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict, it is necessary to begin at the source and pursue a comprehensive approach. The Security Council bears the grave responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It should attach greater importance to the prevention, suppression and elimination of armed conflicts, so as to prevent the occurrence of tragedies. The international community should redouble its efforts to eliminate poverty, universalize education and promote sustainable development, so as to create a security and social environment conducive to the healthy growth of children. That would be the best way to protect children.

Secondly, in considering the issue of children and armed conflict, it is necessary to take into account local conditions and to proceed accordingly. The nature of conflict situations varies, as do situations both on and off the agenda of the Security Council. In that regard, it is always necessary to attach importance to the protection of children. However, there should be differences in the actual approach. It is necessary that we not disregard existing differences or apply a single approach to every situation. China is not in favour of the frequent use or threat of use of sanctions by the Security Council. It is in particular necessary to use caution when it comes to the issue of children and armed conflict.

Thirdly, in addressing the issue of children and armed conflict, it is necessary to fully utilize the role of the Governments of the countries concerned. The relevant resolutions of the Security Council stipulate that Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of the children of their countries. The Security Council and its Working Group should have more communication with the countries concerned and endorse and support the positive measures adopted, continually increase mutual trust and avoid politicizing children's issues. In gathering information and carrying out field work, it is necessary to cooperate with the Governments of the countries concerned, so as to improve efficiency and generate synergies.

The efforts of the Security Council alone are not enough to truly to change the situation of children and armed conflict and give them a good future. We encourage United Nations bodies, regional organizations, the World Bank, other international agencies and non-governmental organizations to strengthen their coordination and cooperation, adopt an integrated strategy, exploit their own strengths and work together to help countries in conflict to increase their capacity to protect children. China will continue to work together with the rest of the international community and to make its due contribution to the protection of children.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I too would like to extend a warm welcome to you, Madam President, and to thank you for personally presiding over this important debate. It is a great pleasure to discuss the issue of children and armed conflict under your presidency. I would like to pay special tribute to the Government of Mexico and its Mission here for very ably chairing the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as to Canada for chairing the Group of Friends of children and armed conflict at the United Nations. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Johnson and Mr. Khare for their briefings. Most of all, Ms. Manju Gurung has inspired us all with her courage and her strong faith in a better future.

The United Nations architecture on children and armed conflict — including the monitoring and reporting mechanism, action plans and the Working Group — have been in place for almost five years now. During those years, there has been steady progress in reducing the number of child soldiers in the world. Some parties to conflict have been de-listed from the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports, such as Burundi in the most recent report (S/2010/181). Parties in the Sudan, Nepal and the Philippines recently signed action plans. In another welcome move, six Central African countries adopted the N'Djamena Declaration last week and committed themselves to taking measures to protect children according to global standards.

Meanwhile, however, some new conflict parties have been listed. The latest report of the Secretary-General contains a list of 55 conflict parties in 13 countries. Clearly, there still remains a major challenge in eliminating the scourge of inhuman treatment of children trapped in armed conflict.

Today I would like to address three issues. The first is accountability for persistent perpetrators. Japan is particularly concerned about 16 parties which have been listed for the past five years. In order to ensure accountability for those persistent perpetrators, the Security Council agreed in resolution 1539 (2004) to consider the possibility of imposing targeted measures against those groups. But the practice is not necessarily consistent or even.

To hold persistent perpetrators accountable, the Security Council should include in its resolutions on the sanctions committees provisions in respect of conflict parties who commit serious violations against children. The Working Group should exchange information and coordinate closely with the work of the sanctions committees. The informal briefing given the other day by Ms. Coomaraswamy to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo was useful, as would be others she could make in the future. We very much encourage other sanctions committees to invite her and to consider similar briefings.

The second issue is rape and other sexual violence. We welcome the fact that, in accordance with resolution 1882 (2009), the report of the Secretary-General this year has listed for the first time the parties responsible for rape and other sexual violence. The report's indication of a relatively low incidence of sexual violence against children does not reflect the reality on the ground or the practice of parties. We believe that it reflects the difficulty of collecting and verifying information on sexual violence in conflict situations. Timely and reliable data are indispensable for appropriate action. Japan is particularly grateful to the efforts of UNICEF and peacekeeping operations personnel on the ground in collecting information and data on sexual violence. We encourage Ms. Coomaraswamy to coordinate closely with the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in the monitoring and reporting of sexual violence against children.

Third is the issue of attacks against education. Japan believes that education is the most essential means of promoting human potential. Achieving universal primary education is one of the fundamental pillars of the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, we have to express strong condemnation of the widespread attacks against schools committed by several armed groups and forces, as reported in the Secretary-General's report. A new UNESCO report, "Education under Attack 2010", indicates that the number of attacks on schools, students and teachers is growing in conflict situations, and that these attacks on education appear to be far more severe and systematic than previously thought. The targeting of girl students in specific settings is a particular concern.

We call upon all conflict parties to stop and prevent attacks against schools and other educational facilities, and against teachers and pupils, including, in particular, girls, and to fully respect international humanitarian law. It is our hope that the next report of the Secretary-General will include full information and analysis on these attacks, which have a severe long-term impact on children and sound national development.

In conflict situations, children are the most vulnerable. Japan is a strong advocate of the concept of human security. I am pleased that Japan and Mexico, as co-chairs of the Friends of Human Security — which is growing — are jointly promoting the mainstreaming of this concept in the work of the United Nations. This human-centred, multisectoral approach, which focuses not only on protection but on empowerment at the individual and community levels, is particularly relevant when we consider children and armed conflict.

Japan has been providing support, through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, for projects that address the issue of children and armed conflict in a comprehensive and multisectoral manner, in many countries including Timor-Leste, Nepal, the Philippines, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Japan remains committed to strengthening the protection and empowerment of children affected on the ground.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Normandin (Canada): Madam President, I would first of all like to thank you and the delegation of Mexico for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank all the speakers of this morning. In particular, I thank Ms. Manju Gurung for her moving and compelling statement, which reminds us of the relevance and the importance of our work.

First, let me say a few words on behalf of the Group of Friends of children and armed conflict, an informal network of over 35 interested Member States, chaired by Canada. The Group of Friends is pleased with the Security Council's commitment to strengthening accountability for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children and encourages decisive action against such perpetrators. We welcome the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a positive step in this direction, and in line with Security Council resolutions 1698 (2006) and 1882 (2009). The Group of Friends also commends the sanctions Committee on the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its ground-breaking engagement and fully supports the designation of individuals for targeted measures, as provided for in resolution 1807 (2008).

The Group of Friends looks forward to the continuation of such fruitful collaboration between the sanctions committees, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and stands ready to work for greater protection of children in situations of conflict.

The Group of Friends is also pleased with the work undertaken by the Security Council in progressively strengthening the protection framework for children affected by armed conflict. However, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is currently the only subsidiary body of the Security Council that does not receive administrative support. In order to continue the recent momentum and ensure day-to-day attention to the children and armed conflict agenda, the Working Group will need ongoing support. Therefore the Group of Friends calls for the immediate provision of administrative support, as requested in resolution 1882 (2009).

Lastly, the Group of Friends congratulates the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, on the launch of the campaign for universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(*spoke in French*)

Speaking now in my national capacity, on behalf of Canada, I would like to formally welcome the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181). This debate is an opportunity to once again bring to the Security Council's attention the severity of continued acts of violence against children, and at the same time to make recommendations for the full implementation of resolution 1882 (2009).

The adoption of that resolution last August has brought forward new improvements to the children and armed conflict agenda, most notably a higher profile on rape and other forms of sexual violence against children and on the killing and maiming of children. In particular, Canada is pleased that perpetrators of sexual violence against children have been exposed in the Secretary-General's annual report. Given the on-the-ground reduction in the number of children used in hostilities, which is a result of diligent monitoring and reporting in recent years, Canada firmly believes that strong monitoring and the exposure of the perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual violence will result in a significant reduction in the number of these incidents. With the expansion of the monitoring and reporting mechanism's mandate to include these two new triggers, strong support from the international community is required on several fronts.

First, the mechanism requires additional financial support from donors in order to be adequately resourced to deliver on its mandate. Secondly, non-governmental organizations and local civil society are key partners and should therefore be supported.

Thirdly, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General, the mechanism requires the political support and cooperation of the national Governments of the countries in question, which should in particular allow access to non-State actors. Canada strongly supports the link between the United Nations and non-State actors in order to ensure that the crucial dialogue with the latter can take place and that an action plan to eliminate grave violations against children can be adopted.

Canada also welcomes the call in resolution 1889 (2009) for the element of accountability to be integrated into the agenda of the Working Group. Sanctions should be imposed more systematically in order for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children to be held accountable. As recommended by the Secretary-General, Canada urges the Security Council to take more vigorous measures against persistent violators who have been listed in the annual report for at least five years for committing grave violations against children.

Finally, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, deserves special recognition for the wealth of information put forward by her Office and for its numerous efforts on behalf of children. She has been a tireless proponent for the protection needs of children and undertaken countless field missions. The collective experience and lessons learned by Ms. Coomaraswamy's Office, the Security Council Working Group, and the monitoring and reporting mechanisms are invaluable. They must be shared, particularly since similar processes on the protection of civilians issues have been activated.

In conclusion, Canada will continue to play a key role and help contribute to concrete results both at the United Nations and on the ground in countries of concern.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list. I therefore intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6341st meeting

Wednesday, 16 June 2010, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr Heller/Mr. Puente	(Mexico)
Members:	Austria	Mrs. Nguyen
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Marinčić
	Brazil	Mr. Figueirôa
	China	Ms. He Fen
	France	Mr. Gonnet
	Gabon	Ms. Onanga
	Japan	Mr. Nishiumi
	Lebanon	Ms. Tawk
	Nigeria	Mr. Edokpa
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lukiyantsev
	Turkey	Mr. Ay
	Uganda	Mr. Nkayivu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Barlow
	United States of America	Mr. Donegan

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181)

Letter dated 15 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/314)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

Please recycle

The meeting resumed at 3.15 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Armenia, Bangladesh and the Philippines, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

I wish to remind all speakers, as did my Secretary of Foreign Affairs this morning, to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Ms. Grau (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for organizing this open debate and welcome the presence this morning of your Secretary of Foreign Affairs. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181) and thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her invaluable work.

Switzerland appreciates the fact that the Secretary-General's report has broadened the criteria for including parties to armed conflict in its annexes, which now include not only those parties responsible for killing or maiming children, but also those responsible for rape or other forms of sexual violence against children. This is an important step. At the same time, more efforts are necessary to make these new provisions effective and to implement resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009).

I would like to comment on some of the report's recommendations. First, the 16 persistent violators must be the subject of the Security Council's strongest and most urgent action. The Council should also consider including provisions relating to the recruitment and illicit use of children in the mandates of all its sanctions committees. In this context, we welcome the precedent set by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, the capacities of the mechanism for monitoring and reporting information on the two additional violations must be strengthened. The relatively low reported incidence of sexual violence against children does not reflect the extent of that practice; rather, it demonstrates the challenge of collecting relevant information. Consequently, the documentation of incidents and trends should be improved and cooperation must be strengthened among entities working to implement the relevant mandates. In particular, gender advisers should have greater involvement with the monitoring and reporting mechanisms at the field level.

Thirdly, the Security Council should encourage concerned Member States to authorize contact between the United Nations and non-State actors to ensure the effective protection of children. Such contact would have no impact on the legal status of non-State actors.

Fourthly, since June 2009, peacekeeping mission policy has been to systematically include the protection of children affected by armed conflict in all stages of mission planning, design and implementation. In this context, Switzerland also supports the deployment of child protection advisers to relevant peacebuilding and political missions, as provided for under resolution 1882 (2009).

I wish to add the following comments to my remarks on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. Attacks on schools and hospitals are an unfortunate and persistent reality. There is a need to improve the monitoring and reporting of information in that respect. The Secretary-General should provide additional information on effective prevention and accountability strategies. The triggers of the monitoring and reporting mechanism could be expanded to include attacks on schools and hospitals. Furthermore, the Security Council should consider the issue of children and armed conflict more systematically, especially in its gender dimensions pursuant to resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) on women, peace and security.

Finally, Switzerland encourages the Security Council to open to non-member States the factual briefings of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on country-specific situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, and Mexico on your work in the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to recognize the work of your delegation in chairing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Colombia, a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, appreciates your initiative in convening this debate. We also recognize the efforts undertaken by the Security Council to strengthen the capacity of States in the protection of children from violence generated by illegal armed groups.

My country has solidly structured institutions and pursues significant efforts to move forward decisively in the realization of the rights of all citizens. The policies implemented by the Government of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez have significantly improved security conditions in Colombia and enhanced the protection of all persons, including children. These policies, firmly anchored in strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions, enjoy the solid backing of Colombian society.

In this context, we seek to apply the full weight of the law against violations of the rights of children committed by groups identified in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181), as organizations that have been included on the annexed lists for at least five years. We regard this designation as part of the international community's required denunciation and censure of acts of deliberate and criminal violence against children.

By voluntarily accepting the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, as provided for in resolution 1612 (2005), the Government of Colombia also expects to receive the support of the United Nations in consolidating institutional capacities for the protection of children. The recognition granted by the Secretary-General in his latest report to the work undertaken by the Government of my country through the Intersectoral Commission for the prevention of recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups highlights the relevance of this strategy. This is a comprehensive policy that includes protection, recovery and reintegration of children separated from those groups.

The Commission has conducted its work in 114 municipalities nationwide and six locations in the capital that are considered to be of high social and economic vulnerability. Through the Commission, safety nets are defined and reinforced in order to reduce the risk of use of children by illegal armed groups at the local, provincial and national levels. Among the strategies put in place, the Commission has encouraged the prevention of violence and established procedures to identify cases or risks of threat. It has also created participatory mechanisms for children to make their voice heard directly in local Governments so that their points of view may be included in public policy.

In that respect, I would like to highlight the awareness project developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Reintegration. Through its implementation, demobilized persons have contributed to the training of 6,200 students in recruitment prevention. With the same objective, the Office of the Ombudsman has promoted the "No more children and adolescents recruited" campaign, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Mayor and Township People's Spokesperson of Soacha, a town near the capital.

Together with the Department of National Planning and strategic partners, the Commission is preparing a document aimed at strengthening the policy to prevent the recruitment and use of children, to be submitted for consideration by the national Government for implementation by all entities involved. Furthermore, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute continues to provide children separated from illegal armed groups comprehensive physical and psychological care to facilitate their full reintegration into society. The Institute also carries out many activities in support of prevention programmes. In the case of Colombia, the Secretary-General's initiative to ensure that adequate resources for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children separated from illegal armed groups are provided to national Governments has had an additional positive effect. We urge Council members to lend their support to this initiative.

For its part, the Attorney General's Office continues to conduct investigations in pursuit of those responsible for recruiting children. As of May 15 2010, the Unit for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Attorney's Office had advanced 239 investigations concerning the recruitment of 775 children. Twelve sentences have been issued affecting 30 perpetrators.

The Colombian Government, in implementing its policy of zero tolerance for human rights violations regardless of who commits them, has not hesitated to punish those associated with the State who may have committed individual acts affecting those rights. Specific measures have been taken to prevention, investigate, prosecute and punish such practices.

My delegation wishes to emphasize the distinction made by the Secretary-General in his reports to the Security Council on the issue of children and armed conflict between situations that are on the agenda of the Council and those that are not. The existence of annexes I and II to the Secretary-General's report adequately reflects this distinction. It is of vital importance that, in applying the monitoring and reporting mechanism, it be borne in mind that each situation is unique and that there is therefore no single formula that can be applied to all of the situations that exist in various countries and regions. Likewise, these decisions must be made in strict compliance with existing legal provisions. In particular, any targeted measures must conform to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Colombia reiterates its willingness and commitment to guarantee the effective protection of children and the promotion of their rights. We do so in the understanding that this task requires a comprehensive approach and coordinated institutional management. My country recognizes the positive contribution that the United Nations can make towards that end.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank Her Excellency the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico for having honoured us with her participation in the meeting this morning. I should also like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that you will demonstrate outstanding and wise leadership as you guide the work of the Council.

I also take this opportunity to convey my gratitude to the delegation of Lebanon for its outstanding presidency of the Council last month.

I should also like to thank you, Sir, for having organized this open debate on children and armed conflict, which, quite clearly, is an issue of great importance to all of us. I pay tribute to the role played by Mexico in this area as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Our thanks go also to the Secretary-General, and we thank his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF for their introductory statements and for all their efforts in this field.

I cannot fail to pay tribute to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her outstanding role on the protection of children in armed conflict, including through her work which benefits Yemen.

Based on our deep-rooted conviction that children are our future, the Republic of Yemen was among the first States to accede to the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, in May 1991. It has also acceded to that Convention's two Optional Protocols. In addition to submitting periodic reports on the implementation of these instruments, Yemen has ratified a number of international conventions in this field, including the Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Furthermore, the Republic of Yemen has passed legislation on children, including Law 45 of 2002, on the rights of the child, and Law 24 of 1992, on assistance to minors. We have also incorporated provisions on the protection of the rights of the child elsewhere in our legislation.

In addition to this legislative framework, the Republic of Yemen has set up institutional mechanisms to ensure that the legislation is implemented in practice, including the High Council for Motherhood and Children, the Ministry of Human Rights, which also attaches great importance to the rights of the child, and departments and offices responsible for children's issues within the framework of other ministries and institutions. Children's issues have had an extremely important place in all national development strategies, programmes and plans adopted since the 1990s.

My delegation has familiarized itself with the ninth report of the Secretary-General on this topic (S/2010/181), which we have before us, and we should like to share with the Council the following clarifications. First, we should like to reaffirm the complete commitment of Yemen to protecting children and promoting their rights. Secondly, during its violent clashes and military confrontations with rebels in Sa'dah province, the Government of Yemen paid due attention to the safety and security of all citizens and in its military actions acted prudently so as to ensure that there were no victims among the civilian population, especially children. We did so by ensuring the security of various public institutions, especially schools and hospitals.

Thirdly, on 21 May, the political leadership of our country decided to release all detainees who had been arrested within the framework of the insurgency launched by rebels in Sa'dah. Fourthly, Yemen has discharged its responsibilities to its citizens affected by the war, despite the very limited resources available to it. Our country cooperates with humanitarian agencies providing assistance to internally displaced persons and people affected by these events by ensuring and facilitating humanitarian access to refugee camps to enable these agencies to see the situation in the camps. The most recent visit to these camps was that of the Secretary-General's Representative for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons.

Fifthly, the Government of Yemen is currently striving to strengthen peace and security, launch reconstruction efforts and ensure the return of displaced persons by guaranteeing decent living conditions to all citizens, including children. The Government of Yemen is determined to include children's issue in future development programmes and in the reconstruction plans for Sa'dah province. In this respect, we call on the international community to support the efforts of the Government of Yemen in this field.

Sixthly and finally, my country reaffirms the primary responsibility of the State to protect children and promote their rights. We also reaffirm the importance of ensuring the relevance and accuracy of the information and data collected, as well as the importance of consulting with the State concerned when reports are being prepared.

In conclusion, we must note that despite the efforts and achievements made in protecting the rights of children in armed conflict, a great deal remains to be done to put an end to their suffering. Here I should like to refer in particular to continued violations against Arab children in the occupied Palestinian territories. The international community is urged to meet its responsibilities by putting an end to the ongoing occupation and thus to enable Palestinian children to live in peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to contribute today. We thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2010/181), Radhika Coomaraswamy for the outstanding role she continues to play as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mexico for its long and commendable history of promoting the issue of children in armed conflict, including by having convened today's debate.

As we sit in the comfort of this Chamber, it is nearing 9 p.m. in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 11 p.m. in the Sudan and 3 a.m. in Myanmar. And as we speak, in such places and elsewhere, children are being handed guns and told to fight, suffering the vilest forms of sexual assault, abuse and rape, or are being disfigured, maimed or even murdered.

Member States, the various organs of the United Nations and the Security Council all have a vital role to play in protecting such children, and there has been some progress on that. For example, New Zealand welcomes the efforts of those countries that have been de-listed from the annexes of the Secretary-General's report and of others that have committed to action plans. We also welcome the fact that child protection enjoys a high profile on the Council's agenda.

However, while there has been progress, much remains to be done. In the interests of time, I will highlight just four recommendations that New Zealand considers important.

First, while we welcome their highlighted listing in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2010/181), it is distressing that there are still 16 parties that, in that context, have recruited, maimed, killed, raped or sexually violated children for at least five years. Those parties are ignoring international law, as well as Council resolutions, presidential statements and conclusions, and more needs to be done to hold them accountable. In line with the Secretary-General's recommendations, we encourage the Council to include the recruitment and use of children in the mandates of its sanctions committees; to ensure that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is asked to brief those committees more regularly; and to prioritize persistent violators on its agenda. We encourage the Council to refer persistent violators to existing sanctions committees and to consider other targeted measures where no sanctions committee exists.

Secondly, we urge those countries concerned to allow United Nations contact teams to meet with non-State armed groups to enable them to prepare action plans and carry out other protection measures. And we ask the Council to take a more active role to ensure that contact. We note, for example, that Government restrictions prevent the United Nations country team in Myanmar from contacting non-State armed groups. That greatly hinders its monitoring and verification activities and means that action plans cannot be concluded.

Thirdly, New Zealand advocates the Security Council's taking a more active role to ensure that parties listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports develop and execute action plans with clear timelines. The Council should ensure that any non-compliance with those plans is promptly dealt with, using the full range of tools at the disposal of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Fourthly, there has been a disturbing increase in the number of politically and ideologically motivated attacks on and threats to teachers, students and educational facilities. We call on the Security Council, in line with international law and its presidential statement of 29 April last year (S/PRST/2009/9), to take a more active role in bringing those violations to an end. One possible step could be for country task forces of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to improve the level of information in their reports on the motivations for and extent of attacks on schools. In his annual and country-specific reports, the Secretary-General could also detail effective strategies for the prevention of such attacks and to improve response and accountability.

Another step could be the more concrete inclusion of child protection, including access to and the quality and political neutrality of education, in future Council outcomes on peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Eventually, the monitoring and reporting mechanism triggers could be expanded to include attacks on schools.

Those are just four steps that could be taken to protect children. There are others, and the ongoing and systematic commitment of the Security Council, Member States, the United Nations and its organs is required to ensure overall action and compliance. In addressing this matter, we should also keep in mind that one of the most effective ways of ensuring the well-being of children is to protect their parents, and that requires the ongoing action of States to protect civilians in armed conflicts, especially women.

In that respect, New Zealand ensures a conflict-sensitive approach in its development assistance to the education and health sectors of fragile States, including human rights education; provides support for the elimination of gender-based violence; and works to foster sustainable and equitable economic development. All of this contributes to building a safe environment where parents and children see options for their future beyond the perpetuation of conflict.

I note that, because of insufficient age determination procedures, the Afghan National Police (ANP) is listed in annex I of the Secretary-General's report. New Zealand welcomes the fact that the ANP already has measures in place to verify the minimum age of recruits, and we encourage its ongoing commitment, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report, to additional measures to verify the age of recruits, as the Afghan National Army has already done. We hope that the implementation of such measures will lead to the de-listing of the ANP, and we encourage the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to work closely with the ANP to implement those measures.

Those children in the deserts, jungles and forests of whom I spoke and who, as we speak, are being forced to fight, are being raped, maimed or even murdered are the children that we must think of during this debate. It is our collective duty to protect them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand): Let me first congratulate Mexico as the President of the Security Council for the month of June and commend its initiative in organizing today's debate. Thailand shares the concerns of the international community regarding children and armed conflict and wishes to share the following views.

First, we wish to note the progress made by the Council on the issue and welcome the mainstreaming of a child-conscious approach in political, peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. With the recent inclusion of two new triggers — namely, the killing and maiming of children and sexual violence against children — we hope that children around the world will be better protected.

Still, to effectively address the issue, States have the primary responsibility for protecting and promoting the rights of the child in their respective jurisdictions. The international community and the United Nations have an important supportive role to play in ensuring that States meet their basic human rights obligations and in empowering them to build an environment where violence against children is unthinkable. The international community needs to invest more in areas that can make a real difference, such as education, basic health care, poverty alleviation, the rule of law and good governance.

Secondly, better coordination among all parties concerned is crucial. Cooperation between United Nations agencies and the Governments concerned needs to be based on mutual respect and sincere dialogue. Closer coordination and greater coherence among the relevant United Nations forums and agencies are also needed. Each forum and agency has its own unique strengths and constraints. With better coordination and coherence among those diverse instruments and an integrated and holistic approach, the United Nations system as a whole should be able to better respond to the challenges.

Thirdly, on the part of Thailand, we wish to reaffirm our strong commitment to protecting the rights of the child. Thailand has long been a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Indeed, we have been at the forefront of efforts to make the Convention more effective and responsive. We have worked hard to ensure universal access to 15 years of quality education and a safe learning environment for our children. We have also invested heavily in measures to promote and protect the rights of children and their development.

Fourthly and finally, utmost care should be exercised in the preparation of the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict. The Secretary-General needs to ensure that information collected and communicated in the production of the reports under his name is accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable by the United Nations system. The scope of the reports should be confined to situations of armed conflict, as defined by international law. Also, there should be more accountability and transparency in the listing and de-listing of parties to conflicts in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General. Reference to countries where there is no situation of armed conflict, in accordance with applicable international law, and sweeping generalizations about their situations are unwarranted, misleading and counterproductive.

Information provided by United Nations agencies on the ground and by the Governments concerned should be fully taken into account. A consultative and cooperative approach will ensure that our efforts are well coordinated and based on reliable information. Lack of such a cooperative spirit may have unattended consequences on the ground, which may harm the very children we wish to protect.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Ney (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement made by representative of the European Union. As a member of the Group of Friends for Children and Armed Conflict, we are pleased to also align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends.

Let me start by extending my gratitude to the Secretary-General and to his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for their dedicated engagement and leadership in taking this important issue forward.

Germany attaches great importance to the protection of the rights of children in situations of armed conflict and is one of the main donors in this field, both bilaterally and multilaterally. We welcome the most recent report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (S/2010/181) and fully endorse all the recommendations contained therein.

However, in our view the Security Council could strengthen the United Nations protection framework for children affected by armed conflict. The report of the Secretary-General contains valuable recommendations in this regard. Let me concentrate on three.

First, with regard to strengthening accountability for persistent perpetrators, the most recent report of the Secretary-General names 16 parties to conflicts that have been repeatedly listed for grave violations and non-compliance with the United Nations for at least five years. However, the credible threat of forceful action by the Security Council against persistent perpetrators is key if we want parties to conflict to engage in time-bound action plans with the Special Representative to stop the violations and abuses for which they are cited. Like other speakers before us, we therefore call upon the Security Council to consider stronger measures, including targeted sanctions, against those parties to conflict listed in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General that persistently ignore calls by the Security Council to cease their illegal practices with regard to children in armed conflict.

The second recommendation concerns an increased collaboration of the Working Group with relevant sanctions committees. In our view, the regular sharing of information between the Working Group and the sanction committees of the Security Council could considerably strengthen the United Nations child protection framework. One way to achieve this might be to invite the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict to brief the relevant sanctions committees on a regular basis. In this context, we welcome her recent briefing of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo as an important first step. The Security Council should also start considering means by which targeted measures may be applied against perpetrators in country situations not covered by existing sanction committees.

Thirdly, with regard to mainstreaming in United Nations peacekeeping operations, the Security Council should remain fully engaged in mainstreaming the issue of children in armed conflict into all United Nations peacekeeping and political operations. In this regard, we welcome the deployment of an increasing number of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations and the adoption of a child protection policy directive by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support on mainstreaming the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict within United Nations peacekeeping operations.

As a last point, I would like to join other members of the Group of Friends in calling for the provision of administrative support for the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as requested in resolution 1882 (2009) and as is currently provided to other subsidiary bodies of the Security Council.

Let me conclude by reiterating our firm support for the Secretary-General and his Special Representative. Germany stands ready to join hands with all those striving to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict worldwide.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): At the outset, let me join others in thanking you, Sir, for organizing this important and timely debate. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada earlier today on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, but we also wish to make a few points of our own.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181), which again makes for rather disturbing reading, and we commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and her Office for their highly dedicated work on this topic.

We are very alarmed by a new UNESCO study that reveals an escalating number of systematic and deliberate attacks on students, teachers and school buildings in conflict settings. State and non-State actors alike are perpetrating such attacks. At the same time, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has addressed the issue only in a small number of conclusions issued between April 2009 and May 2010.

In our view, attacks on schools deserve a more prominent position on the Working Group's agenda, based on enhanced and verifiable information collected through the monitoring and reporting mechanism. The mechanism in turn needs appropriate resources to fulfil its mandate. It is also worthwhile recalling that attacks on schools violate the Hague Conventions and the

Geneva Conventions, including their Protocols, and are also criminalized by the Rome Statute. We therefore urge all States to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law in the prevention of such crimes and to prosecute attacks on schools and educational facilities as war crimes.

In accordance with resolution 1612 (2005), the monitoring and reporting mechanism provides reliable information on situations listed in annexes I and II of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General. We commend the Council for adopting resolution 1882 (2009), which expanded the trigger for the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include, in addition to parties that recruit and use children in armed conflicts, parties that commit rape and other forms of grave sexual violence, and/or parties responsible for the killing and maiming of children. However, to ensure the best possible protection of children, we still believe that equal weight must be given to all six grave violations as triggers for the mechanism.

The differential treatment of grave violations of children's rights in various conflicts is difficult to square with the universality and interdependence of human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law. We therefore encourage the Council to continue to develop this mechanism and to consider, as a next step, the expansion of the monitoring and reporting trigger mechanism to attacks on schools.

Sixteen parties have been listed in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General for more than five years. We are of the view that these persistent violators must be subject to the Council's strongest and most urgent action. Measures taken by the Working Group in response to persistent violators should be complemented by effective enforcement measures such as sanctions, including arms embargoes, bans on military assistance, and the imposition of travel restrictions. We call on the Council to include the recruitment and use of child soldiers in the mandates of relevant sanctions committees.

The first briefing of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an important step in the right direction. In this context, we support an approach that allows direct contact between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and relevant non-State actors with a view to preparing an action plan that could ultimately lead to the de-listing of some conflict parties from the annex.

Finally, in addressing the issue of persistent violators, the Security Council should also be mindful of its competence to refer to the International Criminal Court, for investigation and prosecution, situations involving violations of the rights of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, acting head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Serrano (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like at the outset to express my gratitude for the invitation extended to the European Union (EU) to participate in this debate.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

In the interests of the smooth conduct of this debate, I shall read out a condensed version of the European Union's statement.

As other speakers have done, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. The participation of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico was a reflection of her personal engagement in this important issue. It also illustrated the intensive work done by the delegation of Mexico under the leadership of amba Heller as Chair of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy for her tireless efforts on behalf of children affected by armed conflict. I wish in particular to send a special greeting to Ms. Manju Gurung, whose powerful and moving words shed light on the reality we face.

(*spoke in English*)

As the Council is aware, the fight against the adverse impact of conflicts on children is high on the EU's foreign policy, development and humanitarian agenda. The European Union is a firm supporter of and partner to the United Nations in this context, both with regard to policy development and to implementing actions. I am happy to announce that the European Union plans to review and further enhance its engagement so that we can improve our response to current challenges and our contributions to the work of the United Nations in this area.

Important progress has been made over the past year. Like many others, we welcomed resolution 1882 (2009) and the expansion of the triggers for listing to the killing and maiming of children, as well to rape and other sexual violence. We look forward to the further implementation of the resolution, in particular steps aimed at strengthening the United Nations ability to gather and analyse information. In that context, we look forward to closer cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The European Union is grateful for the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2010/181) and its recommendations, and welcomes the attention that is drawn therein to persistent violators. We also commend the work of the Security Council Working Group and its country-specific conclusions and recommendations. The European Union, through its programmes and projects, lends concrete support to their implementation.

Moreover, we welcome the first steps taken recently towards increasing the exchange of information with Sanctions Committees. We would like to encourage much more interaction with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sanctions Committees and their expert groups, and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Furthermore, the European Union encourages the Security Council to include in the mandates of Sanctions Committees, where appropriate, provisions pertaining to violations of applicable international law committed against children and of resolutions on children and armed conflict.

In line with the European Union's strong commitment to international law, we also firmly and actively support the Special Representative's campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The European Union systematically brings up children's rights issues in political dialogues and when discussing country strategies with partner countries. We also cooperate with civil society on these matters. We particularly seek to help to prevent the recruitment of children and to ensure their unconditional release and reintegration. We also pay special attention to the situation of girls.

Furthermore, the European Union uses its early warning mechanisms and conflict-sensitive approaches, flexible financial tools and procedures to provide quick responses to children in need. We have also increased the awareness of our staff of these issues, both at headquarters and at the country level. European Union personnel are engaged in gathering and sharing information on situations and countries of concern. Our priority countries for action are in line with those identified by the United Nations.

Like the Special Representative, we support the mainstreaming of children's rights into crisis management. Within the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy, we use a checklist to integrate the protection of children affected by armed conflict into the planning and conduct of European Union crisis management missions. As an example, I would like to refer to our security sector reform mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which promotes the enrolment of children in school.

The European Union funds numerous programmes and projects to contribute to the protection of children in armed conflict. These address prevention issues, respond to the needs of girls, foster the social inclusion of children affected by armed conflict, and attempt to make justice and other services accessible to victims. In that context, the European Union would like to express its grave concern about the increased number of attacks on educational facilities and to encourage the Security Council to address this problem in its future deliberations.

The European Union also believes in the importance of investigating, prosecuting and punishing all those who commit grave violations against children. We have repeated on numerous occasions that every effort must be made to end the culture of impunity. We would like to recall here that children are specially protected by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. As the Council is aware, the European Union strongly supports the effective functioning of the International Criminal Court and other international criminal tribunals.

As has been mentioned, during the second half of 2010 the European Union will review its implementation strategy for children and armed conflict-related actions so as to align them even better with current needs and with international developments in this field. To that end, we look forward to working closely with the Office of Special Representative Coomaraswamy and with other relevant United Nations actors, such as UNICEF.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Rulumeni (South Africa): South Africa wishes to express its appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this open debate on children and armed conflict, to which we attach great importance. We also wish to extend our thanks for the briefings presented by Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Assistant Secretary-General Khare; Ms. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; and Ms. Gurung.

My delegation appreciates the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict to enhance the protection of children in situations of armed conflict and to promote a more concrete protection response. We also wish to recognize the important work and progress made as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the members of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which your delegation leads, Mr. President.

We would like to reiterate the importance and relevance of the first report on children affected by armed conflict, contained in document A/51/306. In that context, we note with satisfaction that, since the release of that report, significant progress has been made in the development of international legal and policy frameworks for the protection of children in armed conflict.

The adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict in 2005 was a significant demonstration of the actions taken by the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the international community, which have produced tangible progress that includes greater protection and awareness of the plight of children in conflict situations. My delegation has also noted the inclusion of, and the provision of separate sections on, the protection of children in Council resolutions, such as those on peacekeeping missions. We have also noted the prominence of the latest resolution on this issue — resolution 1882 (2009), which was adopted last year — as follow-up to the relevant Security Council resolutions to monitor and report on progress.

In his report of 13 April (S/2010/181), the Secretary-General indicates that, in accordance with the newly implemented child protection policy directive of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Security Council is also being urged to ensure that specific provisions for the protection of children continue to be included in all relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as in political and peacebuilding missions. It also goes on to urge that child protection concerns be reflected in all these missions.

Of note is the progress achieved in a number of countries emerging from conflict. In Burundi, for example, the progress in discussions on the release of children associated with the Forces nationales de libération, which culminated in the formal release of a group of children on 2 April in response to the declaration of the Special Envoys for the Great Lakes Region and continued advocacy by the United Nations and the Political Directorate, as well as the regional initiative, warrants commendation.

Notwithstanding these achievements, there is still much to be done to protect children from grave violations. My delegation is disheartened by the fact that the recruitment of children continues globally. We must also highlight the lack of progress in the implementation of the provisions of resolution 1612 (2005) on monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Children remain vulnerable and adversely affected by armed conflict despite positive developments.

South Africa therefore encourages the Security Council to redouble its efforts and pay more attention to addressing the plight of these affected children. We call upon all the armed groups involved in the recruitment of children and those groups that are party to conflict to enter into dialogue and to agree to and implement concrete, time-bound action plans to cease and prevent grave violations committed against children, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report.

Ensuring the well-being of children is not an event but a complex and long process. Beyond domestic political circumstances, and given that many conflicts have cross-border dimensions, neighbouring States as well as regional and subregional organizations play a critical role and have commensurate responsibilities in finding solutions for children affected by conflict. While the demobilization of children from armed groups remains a concern, the Secretary-General's report informs us that some children who have been demobilized often voluntarily rejoin in order to receive salaries to support their families.

My delegation welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund in undertaking to assist and prepare time-bound action plans that would include measures to screen the armed groups and armed forces, as well as the establishment of prevention mechanisms against the further recruitment of children. The priority, however, is to ensure the release of children from armed groups through utilizing mechanisms such as these action plans and focusing special attention on the needs of all children affected by armed conflict.

Sustained investment in health and social infrastructures, as well as education and skills training, will ensure the successful integration of children in their communities and prevent re-recruitment. Special attention should be given to girls who have been exploited by armed groups. The rehabilitation and reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces require immediate attention. Adequate funding and resources should be made available by the international community to assist national efforts to develop relevant and effective programmes that will ensure the long-term sustainability and success of such interventions.

South Africa supports dialogue and enhanced international cooperation to encourage recalcitrant parties to adhere to the letter and the sprit of those international instruments that provide the most basic and appropriate protection of the rights of the child in situations of armed conflict. The recruitment and use of children in armed conflict is not only an affront to human values but also a fundamental impediment to long-term socioeconomic development, nation-building and social cohesion.

Lastly, my delegation supports the adoption of the draft presidential statement at the end of this meeting.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): I wish to congratulate Mexico on its assumption of the Security Council presidency for the month of June. I thank the Mexican presidency for convening this open debate on an important topic dear to our hearts. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report contained in document S/2010/181, and Special Representative Coomaraswamy for her briefing before the Council.

We appreciate the efforts of United Nations entities during the reporting period in protecting children from violations in armed conflict, and particularly in monitoring and reporting on grave violations of children's rights, incorporating child protection policy into peacekeeping operations, and promoting the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. At the national level, we are pleased to note that 131 countries have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, that significant successes have been recorded in integrating child rights and child protection goals into national development plans and strategies, that many States have enacted new pieces of legislation to prevent and prohibit grave violations against children, and that more parties to armed conflict are now engaged in establishing action plans to release children from their ranks and to end the recruitment and use of child solders.

My delegation, however, remains deeply concerned about persistent violations committed against children by many parties to armed conflict, and equally concerned about the high numbers of civilian casualties, including children, during military operations in several parts of the world. We are dismayed by the increasing hostility against humanitarian aid work in more than one war-torn country, driving civilian populations — children in the first place — into extremely difficult living conditions.

We condemn all these acts and call on all parties concerned to comply with international human rights and humanitarian laws. We join the call for the Security Council to ensure that specific provisions for the protection of children continue to be included in all relevant peacekeeping operations, and that child protection concerns be integrated into mission planning instruments and processes, as appropriate. It is our view that child protection concerns should be consistently reflected in peace processes and peace agreements, and that children's particular needs included in post-conflict peace planning and financing.

We recognize the work of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, which is essential to keeping us all abreast of developments on the ground. At the same time, we believe that greater caution is needed in selecting specific situations to be mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, bearing in mind the scope of the report as mandated by resolutions 1612 (2005)and 1882 (2009). It is necessary that this mechanism operate with the participation of and in cooperation with national Governments, and that all actions undertaken by United Nations entities within the framework of this mechanism be designed to support and supplement, as appropriate, the role of national Governments. Consultations with Member States should also be further enhanced during preparation of reports to ensure that the information contained therein is updated, non-biased, reliable and verifiable.

Let me reiterate Viet Nam's view that the State bears the primary role and responsibility in protecting its civilians, including children, in armed conflict. The contact between the United Nations and non-State actors should therefore be conducted in cooperation with concerned Governments in order to avoid possible prejudgment in giving political and legal status to those non-State actors, including in particular terrorist groups.

Furthermore, child protection in situations of armed conflict should always be part and parcel of a broader strategy of conflict prevention and response that deals with hunger and poverty as well as socio-economic development. I also wish to emphasize the indispensable cooperation of United Nations bodies in the successful implementation of such a strategy. In this connection, it is vital to ensure closer and more effective coordination among the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as among peacekeeping and political missions, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and other agencies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the delegation of Mexico on its stewardship of the Council this month and to thank it for convening this very important debate. I also wish to thank Her Excellency Secretary of Foreign Affairs Patricia Espinosa Cantellano for her presence here earlier today. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy; the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Atul Khare; and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Hilde Johnson, for their informative statements and their commitment to this important issue.

I also wish to commend the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for its important work and the Permanent Representative of Mexico for his able guidance as Chair of the Working Group. Finally, I also wish to offer my personal thanks to Ms. Manju Gurung for appearing before this Council and sharing her experience with us. Her testimony awakens us all to the necessity to act decisively on the issue of children in armed conflict.

Since this Council last debated this issue, significant advances have been made in the protection of children in situations of armed conflict, including the adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), expanding the scope of the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports. Additionally, for the first time, a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict is coordinating the activities of the United Nations on this issue.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181) highlights progress in other areas, as well. In nearly every region affected by conflict, scores, hundreds, and even thousands of children conscripted into armed groups have been released. In many other situations, action plans have been developed and should be implemented without delay.

Unfortunately, for the hundreds of thousands who remain trapped in armed groups, valuable time is being lost. All those who exploit minors in armed conflict must cease this practice and immediately release the children in their ranks. We further urge sustained international support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts so that children can hope for a future outside of combat. In addition, the increased deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions could serve as an additional tool for monitoring and defending the interests of children.

Israel follows with interest the important work of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The attention she has paid to children in specific situations of conflict, as well as that paid by the Security Council Working Group through its reports and communications, has the potential to rein in the most egregious practices of armed groups.

We note the reference in the Secretary-General's report to Israel's concern that more information should be provided in order to enable the appropriate authorities to investigate and respond substantively, where appropriate. However, the continued reliance on allegations lacking supporting detail continues to undermine the credibility of the report. We therefore urge the Office of the Special Representative to give greater attention to the invaluable process of carefully documenting and vetting the various sources of the information it receives and uses in its reports, especially those aspects that rely heavily on uncorroborated allegations.

While we hope for and work towards peace, our region remains filled with dangerous threats against children from terrorists and extremists. We welcome the mention of Israeli children who have been victims of armed conflict — a sad reality that Israeli children have had to live with. We also take note of the instances of the exploitation of children and their use as human shields by the Hamas terrorist rulers in Gaza. Given the abundance of accounts and documentation of such incidents, we strongly encourage future reports of the Special Representative to further elaborate on this aspect, rather than mentioning it in passing.

One such well-documented incident took place just weeks ago when approximately 30 gunmen attacked and set fire to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) recreational facilities dedicated to use by children. The attack not only undermined the work of UNRWA and was condemned by the Secretary-General, but according to the UNRWA Director of Operations in Gaza it was also "an attack on the happiness of children". In addition, one abhorrent practice of Hamas is to gather civilians — notably children — to the location of a pending strike by the Israel Defense Forces on terrorists or weapons facilities, in the knowledge that Israel will refrain from intentionally attacking civilians.

While the incidents I have just described require the attention of this Council, the broader context in which children are used in armed conflict by terrorists must also be addressed. In this respect, the incitement of children is no less dangerous than terrorism, as hateful education fans the flames of conflict. Let me be clear — inciting children today provides them with the foundation for becoming the terrorists of tomorrow.

Accordingly, the international community has a duty to prevent such incitement in schools, camps, houses of worship, the media and elsewhere. Many children across the region, and in particular generation after generation of Palestinian children, have been taught to deny Israel's legitimacy and to hate and kill Jews. Such incitement is only one element in a determined effort by many in the region to indoctrinate children to take up arms.

Although examples abound, I wish to share only one with this Council. A Hamas magazine for children reads

> "Oh, our Aqsa [Mosque], we shall return; we are soldiers of God's religion ... We will rejoice at the victory and kill the Jews by the sword".

We tend to focus our energies primarily on the conscription and use of children in hostilities. It is no less important that we effectively and more comprehensively deal with the brainwashing of children who are taught to glorify terrorism, martyrdom and anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, hatred and violence are taught to children. Yet we can — we must — undo the teaching of such destructive ways so that all children will become contributing members of a global, tolerant society.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): I wish to thank the Mexican presidency for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict, a subject in which Italy is very involved. I would also like to commend Ambassador Heller for his valuable leadership of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Finally, I express my deep appreciation to Special Representative Coomaraswamy for her commitment to defending and promoting the rights of children who are victims of armed conflicts.

In taking the floor, Italy endorses the statement made by the representative of the European Union. We also support the comments made by the representative of Canada on behalf the Group of Friends for Children and Armed Conflict, of which Italy is a member.

The protection of children's rights during armed conflicts is one of Italy's foreign policy priorities. During our 2007-2008 term on the Security Council, we proposed the insertion of child protection provisions into United Nations mission mandates. We are glad that this has become standard practice and we encourage the Council to continue to ensure that such provisions are included in all relevant United Nations mission mandates.

Moreover, just one year ago, we organized in Rome an international conference, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and the non-governmental organization Save the Children. The participants included several former child soldiers and youth advocates of the Network of Young People Affected by War. I cannot but stress the importance of listening carefully to the voices of those who have lived through such a terrible experience — as we have today.

Finally, Italy is financing numerous projects in various countries, targeting conflict and post-conflict situations, with a special focus on children. We also support rehabilitation and education programmes through UNICEF and other United Nations agencies.

Italy welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) and strongly endorses its recommendations. We join other delegations in calling on the Security Council to adopt more vigorous measures against persistent violators. Impunity is indeed a critical problem. In that regard, we believe that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has a key role to play. In our view, the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should examine ways to develop practical cooperation with the ICC in fighting impunity.

We also attach great importance to the action plans and welcome the signing and implementation of plans that lead to the release and reintegration of child soldiers.

Child Protection Advisers on United Nations missions perform essential duties, including training. Adequate training in child protection is one of the core priorities set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, Italy is considering supporting a new initiative by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and Save the Children, to develop a comprehensive and systematic training programme, for all peacekeeping personnel, on child protection and child rights. We hope that other donors will be interested in supporting this strategic project.

I conclude by expressing our strong support for the United Nations campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Universal ratification is an ambitious but realistic goal. It would reflect our determination to put an end to the worst violations of the rights of the child, which are also a major threat to the stability and welfare of our societies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Rodríguez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the initiative to convene this open debate on a matter of great importance for my country: the participation of children in armed conflicts. I am grateful to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Mr. Atul Khare and Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson for their briefings. It is only appropriate that I make special mention of the courageous testimony provided by Ms. Manju Gurung.

My country supported the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), which unquestionably marked significant progress in the protection of children in armed conflict. It enabled the Secretary-General to name in the annexes of his reports parties that have committed acts of sexual violence, killing or maiming against children in armed conflict. But more work is needed to ensure proper implementation of the resolution. In that regard, it is necessary to build the capacity of United Nations agencies, programmes, funds and missions to carry out new tasks and mandates.

It must be recalled that, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report, the low incidence of sexual violence against children reported does not reflect the true depth and extent of that practice; rather, it reflects the challenges encountered in collecting and verifying information on that issue. To that end, it is necessary to consider mechanisms that will make it possible for

United Nations agencies and, above all, the various Security Council sanctions committees and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, to exchange reliable information on acts of sexual violence with a view to taking steps to reduce and combat that scourge. The political will of the parties is essential for proper implementation of resolution 1882 (2009). The parties must therefore commit themselves to develop zero-tolerance policies against sexual violence, and to fight against the killing and maiming of children.

At the same time, implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) must continue, in particular as regards the preparation of specific action plans with timelines for putting an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. The report of the Secretary-General indicates progress in that regard, and it is vital that donations to ensure the sustainability of such programmes continue to flow, making it possible to maintain the rehabilitation of former child soldiers and their reintegration into their communities.

It is cause for concern to read in the report of the Secretary-General about impunity for perpetrators of these heinous crimes against children. This is due in part to a lack of political will, but also to the fragility of legal and judicial systems and to a lack of resources and experience for carrying out investigations. Hence, the Peruvian delegation considers that United Nations field missions should play a key role by focusing their efforts on strengthening the legal and judicial systems of countries emerging from conflict and on supporting legislative reform and training for those involved in law enforcement.

My country also believes that the Peacebuilding Commission must incorporate the issue of children affected by armed conflict into plans and programmes for recovery and reconstruction. The Commission's working group on lessons learned should take account of successful experiences in reintegrating former child soldiers into various areas of economic and social life following conflict.

The establishment of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict — and here I hail Mexico's excellent work as its Chair — reflects the Security Council's commitment to protecting children in situations of armed conflict. Hence, pursuant to resolution 1882 (2009), the Group should be given appropriate administrative and substantive support to enable it to carry out its tasks.

I wish also to acknowledge the dedicated work of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the important work of UNICEF, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other relevant entities. We call on States and on all parties to conflict to cooperate with them.

We possess a broad legal framework to combat the use of children in armed conflict, to protect them and to ensure their safety in times of violence. The well-being of children depends on the sense of responsibility and political will of States in complying with our obligations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Hernández-Milian (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): In its national capacity, Costa Rica aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of children and armed conflict.

It is an honour for Costa Rica to speak today in its capacity as Chair of the Human Security Network (HSN) and on behalf of the following members of the Network: Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand, and South Africa as an observer.

We would like to thank Mexico for convening this important open debate on children and armed conflict, which has been one of the priority issues for the HSN since its inception. The presence this morning of Ms. Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, was a particular reflection of its importance. We also would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her introduction of the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181). Our thanks to also to the representatives of UNICEF and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as well as to the Council's special guest, Ms. Manju Gurung, for their valuable contributions to the debate.

We believe that the information provided on the criteria and procedures used for listing and de-listing parties to armed conflict in the annexes of the reports is an important step for greater clarity, objectivity, transparency and accountability in the Security Council's work for the protection of children affected by armed conflicts.

We welcome the efforts and the important progress made in different parts of the world to address the six grave violations committed against children in armed conflicts. The Security Council's strengthening of its protection framework in all its relevant resolutions — in particular its most recent one on this issue, resolution 1882 (2009) — as well as ongoing efforts in the General Assembly and other bodies of the United Nations system, are a clear sign of commitment.

We also acknowledge the positive trend towards mainstreaming the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict within some United Nations missions on the ground. We encourage the relevant departments of the Secretariat responsible for providing support to the field, in particular the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office, to work closely together to ensure a more systematic and consistent approach in all field missions. The appointment of more child protection advisers could also contribute to this end.

We still face major challenges in responding to the issues that affect children in armed conflicts. The effectiveness of United Nations work on this issue has been limited by the low number of situations where action plans have been effectively implemented after signature; the absence of systematic follow-up to the recommendations of the Working Group; the lack of decisive action against persistent violators, as well as accountability measures to fight impunity; and insufficient funding for sustainable disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including for the social protection of children who have been associated with armed forces and groups.

In order to address these challenges, the Human Security Network believes that action plans are among the most important mechanisms to achieve tangible results and a fundamental tool in halting the recruitment of children. As part of the de-listing process, the main elements of these action plans should be tailored to the new requirements set forth in resolution 1882 (2009) in order to respond more effectively to other violations against children, such as killing, maiming and sexual violence.

It is important to complement these action plans with a strong programmatic response to support Governments in implementing national strategies that include prevention within a multisectoral approach to assist and protect children who have been associated with armed forces and groups, and in particular to ensure their access to medical care, psychological and psychosocial support, legal assistance, education and sustainable socio-economic reintegration. Assistance measures must focus on preventing their marginalization and stigmatization and on facilitating their social reintegration. Furthermore, a more stable and long-term funding structure to fulfil all elements of the action plans and to implement sustained disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes is critical to preventing re-recruitment and the reoccurrence of other violations.

All parties to conflicts must in all circumstances refrain from committing and condoning grave violations against children in armed conflict. The real commitment of civilian and military leaders and the principle of command responsibility are fundamental to enforcing the accountability of all perpetrators of grave violations under internationally agreed standards. The complementary role of international justice mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court and others, can also play a relevant role in supporting national efforts to fight impunity, as appropriate. Targeted and effective means to ensure compliance should be considered, in particular against persistent perpetrators of grave violations. In addition, the Security Council should improve the communication and exchange of information among its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure a more coherent approach.

Lastly, the Human Security Network considers it important to give systematic follow-up to the recommendations of the Working Group, including in the reports of the Special Representative. The agreed conclusions should serve as indicators of progress in successive evaluations of every situation involving children affected by armed conflict. In this regard, we also believe that administrative support for the Working Group is necessary. This could help to systematize information, strengthen historical memory, facilitate assessment, and identify trends and patterns to promote a more strategic vision and find remedies for every situation involving children affected by armed conflict. Last but not least, a more efficient use of the toolkit, in particular the conduct of field visits, would also enhance follow-up by the Working Group.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Mikec (Croatia): At the outset, allow me to thank Mexico's presidency of the Security Council for organizing this open debate and for its dedicated work on the issue of children and armed conflict. Croatia would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Croatia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the European Union and by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends for Children and Armed Conflict.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2008 and 2009, Croatia contributed to the adoption of resolution 1882 (2009). Croatia is pleased to see that, in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181), the parties to armed conflict that engage in patterns of killing and maiming and or rape and other sexual violence against children, have been listed. In future reports of the Secretary-General, Croatia would like to see strengthened monitoring and reporting mechanism capacities with a view to the implementation of resolution 1882 (2009).

Croatia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General and its recommendations, the rigorous implementation of which could greatly alter the lives of these children. Croatia further welcomes the progress achieved by several parties to armed conflict in releasing children, addressing impunity for perpetrators of grave violations, and undertaking measures to prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report. However, we remain deeply concerned about the lack of compliance by many parties to armed conflict with signed action plans as well as with the conclusions and recommendations of the Council's Working Group.

The implementation of concrete time-bound action plans and the adoption of measures against any party that fails to thus comply are crucial for halting child recruitment, killing and maiming, rape and other sexual violence committed against children. It is important for the Security Council to develop a plan for tracking the progress and implementation of the action plans. It is also important that the concerned Member States allow contact between the United Nations and non-State actors.

Croatia encourages the Council to include child recruitment and use, rape and other sexual violence against children in the mandates of the relevant sanctions committees. We would also like to encourage the Council to ensure that the Special Representative is regularly invited to brief the sanctions committees. In the countries where a national justice system is not willing or able to do so, the Security Council should consider referring cases of identified perpetrators to the International Criminal Court. These measures can be used efficiently to compel persistent violators listed in the Secretary General's annual reports to finally cease their abhorrent practices.

Croatia attaches great importance to paragraph 11 of resolution 1882 (2009) on the inclusion of specific provisions for the protection of children in all relevant United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political mandates. In order for violations committed against children to be addressed more efficiently, Croatia encourages the Council to call upon parties mentioned in the Secretary-General's report to engage with the United Nations peacekeeping missions. Croatia welcomes the newly implemented child protection policy directive of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Croatia strongly believes that child protection concerns should be included in all mission planning processes, as well as in reports to the Council.

Building on everything I have mentioned, Croatia urges concerned Member States and non-State actors to address child concerns in peace processes and peace agreements. This will give child-related issues priority within the post-conflict peace consolidation and peacebuilding.

As a member of the Security Council, Croatia contributed to previous debates on the same issue with a clear focus on the eradication of these human rights violations. The Security Council needs to find a way to agree on targeted or other vigorous measures against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children; otherwise, the United Nations and its Member States will be faced with the same issues year after year. For almost a decade, we have seen the same names on the lists annexed to the Secretary General's reports, and we find the situation unacceptable.

Croatia believes that the Security Council can act more systematically and more urgently as a part of its mandate on peace and security, using all of its powers to ensure that there are no more violations against children in armed conflict. Let me assure the Council that the Republic of Croatia remains committed to this important issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to begin by expressing our appreciation for the initiative of the Mexican presidency of the Security Council for organizing this debate, and to congratulate it on its work on and commitment to this issue as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Argentina recently presented its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, specifically including its implementation of the pertinent Optional Protocol ratified by our country in 2002. We join in the call for the prompt ratification of the Protocol with a view to its universalization.

We wish to underline that there are no children under 18 years of age among the members of the armed forces of the Argentine Republic. Since 1994, military service has been voluntary. The law establishes a minimum age of 18 years of age and stipulates that the rights safeguarding human dignity, recognized, adhered to and practiced by our country, constitute the foundation of the drafting and enacting of specific norms of procedure, which must be complied with and demanded by all citizens if omitted. Laws, military rules and regulations and international conventions that govern human activities and behaviours within the armed forces must include and guarantee the necessary safeguards to citizens working for the national defence system, as well as its goals and ends, which must be in accordance with the paramount interests of the nation.

Armed forces educational institutions are dependent from the Ministry of Defence and impart education at the starting, primary and secondary levels. Their curriculums are analogous to those of other centres for public education in the country and governed by national laws and the resolutions of the Federal Council for Education. A review has been initiated of all the disciplinary regimes and rules and regulations of conduct currently in force at military secondary education institutions in order to align them with the full protection of rights.

Regarding the recruitment of underage girls and boys, until 2009 graduates from military secondary schools who had received military training became part of the country's military reserves. Since the decision to receive such an education and become part of the reserves falls to parents, the Ministry of Defence will implement, starting this year, an instance for the ratification or revocation of such a decision by the young persons involved, which will be enforced upon their turning 18 years old.

Reports from the field indicate important progress in the implementation of resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), such as the conclusion of action plans by States and parties to conflicts, and other concrete measures, such as the liberation of children and programmes for psychosocial treatment, reintegration and the re-establishment of rights. On the other hand, the global situation remains devastating, and cases of child recruitment and extreme forms of violence against children, including mutilation and sexual violence, persist. These call for the maintenance and strengthening of mechanisms to work actively on this issue. The parties must pursue their dialogue with the mechanisms of the United Nations and progress in the adoption and full implementation of action plans to that end.

No argument can be validly made to justify abhorrent attacks against the most vulnerable boys and girls, who are not safe even inside their schools. Governments and the various instances of the United Nations system must fully cooperate with the Special Representative in her work to implement the mandates of the 2005 and 2008 resolutions through the provision of necessary information, cooperation and access. On the other hand, we believe that the Security Council must continue to include a specific mandate on this issue in all peacekeeping, peacebuilding or political missions, and to incorporate specific advisers.

We would like to express our appreciation for the efforts made to date by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative, UNICEF, the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and the child protection advisers. The international community cannot stand idle in the face of practices and abuses as grave as those identified in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181), and we must work on the important recommendations put forward in that document to strengthen the system and to bring perpetrators to justice.

We recognize that the protection of children in all its aspects is an issue falling primarily to the General Assembly, and in this regard we support efforts to strengthen the mandates of existing mechanisms and the coordination of efforts. Argentina reiterates its ongoing commitment to the protection of children from all forms of violence and its readiness to continue cooperating with the Working Group and all mechanisms that strive to promote and protect the rights of children and to allow them to be just what they are — boys and girls.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the lofty position of President of the Security Council for this month. We are totally confident that, under your leadership, the Security Council will be able to accomplish all the objectives on its agenda for this month.

I also want to express our gratitude for the outstanding leadership of the Ambassador of Lebanon and his team last month.

The situation of children in armed conflicts, including foreign occupation, from which the children of Palestine continue to suffer, remains a matter of grave concern. We grieve for the millions of innocent children around the world whose lives have been taken violently and prematurely by armed conflict and for the millions of other children who continue to suffer the traumas of armed conflict.

The fact that the Secretary-General has had to appoint a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and that the Security Council must continue, along with the General Assembly, Human Rights Council and other United Nations organs and agencies, to address this very serious matter year after year is a sad testament to the failure of the international community to live up to its commitments and legal obligations to protect children from the scourge of armed conflicts.

Children in situations of armed conflict continue to be the victims of appalling human rights violations, exploitation and grave crimes. Millions of children are forced to live in fear, hunger, poverty, isolation and despair among their devastated families and communities. Their rights to life, to health, to education, to food, to family, to development and to be nurtured and protected are grossly violated. Failure to provide them with the protection they are entitled to under international humanitarian and human rights law has deepened their suffering, with immense socio-economic, humanitarian, political and security consequences for their societies and nations.

Urgent action is required to uphold our commitment to protecting children from the horrors of armed conflict, among them children living under foreign occupation. We must ensure respect for their rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other relevant legal instruments, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

What is missing is not intention, as evidenced in the international declarations and positions reaffirmed time and again. What is missing is the political will to directly address the crises being faced by children in situations of armed conflict and to thus render the debating of this global dilemma unnecessary. This would require, among other steps, real measures to ensure the accountability of those found to be persistently committing grave violations against children in armed conflict. There must be zero tolerance for the perpetration of crimes against children in all cases, without exception. Excuses should not be made or accepted for violations of the rights, safety and innocence of children.

The lack of accountability for systematic human rights violations and war crimes against civilians in armed conflict has fostered a vicious culture of impunity that has only prolonged conflicts and compounded the vulnerability and suffering of innocent civilians. I can say without doubt that this has been the case in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where Israel, the occupying Power, has been permitted to act with impunity, in total disrespect of all norms of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, resulting in a heavy price being paid by Palestinian children.

Generations of Palestinian children have been traumatized by decades of human rights violations by Israel, the occupying Power. In this regard, we recall a telling reflection by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, to whom we express our appreciation for her tireless efforts to call attention to the plight of children in armed conflicts and to advocate for their protection and well-being. In a 2007 report after her visit to the occupied Palestinian territory, she noted that this ongoing conflict has created "a palpable sense of loss and a feeling of hopelessness that places the children of the West Bank and Gaza apart from all other situations".

Tragically, the plight of Palestinian children has not improved since her last report on the situation there. Their situation has deteriorated in all respects, in particular in the Gaza Strip, where children — who constitute over half of the population, the majority of them refugees — continue to be tormented by the occupation policies, particularly Israel's illegal and shameful blockade imposed in collective punishment of the entire population.

The critical situation of children in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is reflected in the Secretary-General's recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181). While that important report provides a brief, sterile glimpse into the pervasive and intense suffering of Palestinian children during the reporting period, particularly in the aftermath of the Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip in December 2008, it nevertheless conveys a grim picture of what Palestinian children continue to endure under Israeli occupation. This includes death and injury, as at least 374 children were killed and over 2,000 injured, the majority during the Israeli military aggression against Gaza. Children were also repeatedly used as human shields by the occupying forces. Children face homelessness and displacement as a result of the military aggression, the wanton destruction of homes in Gaza, the demolition of homes and eviction of Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem, as well as the continued confiscation of Palestinian land and property by Israel for its illegal colonization campaign.

Children also endure forcible and violent interrogation, detention, arrest and physical and mental ill-treatment and torture by the occupying forces, including threats of rape and sexual assault against children between the ages of 12 and 15. At least 305 children remain in Israeli jails, 42 of them under the age of 15.

There are grave violations of children's rights to health and to education as a result of Israel's destruction of schools and health centres, the blockade's obstruction of necessary medical and school supplies, and blatant discrimination against Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem. At least nine children died in Gaza wile waiting for Israeli permits to travel outside the territory to receive life-saving medical treatment.

Children also continued to be victims of settler attacks, being shot, beaten and threatened while walking to school, tending livestock or playing outside their homes. Their right to food has been grossly violated in blockaded Gaza, where thousands have been afflicted by hunger, malnutrition, anaemia, stunted growth and other diseases as a result. The socio-economic conditions and overall well-being of children also continued to decline as a result of Israel's intentional obstruction of livelihoods and impoverishment of the majority of the population.

As for the alleged Palestinian deficiencies referred to in the Secretary-General's report, we continue to strive through our ministries and national, judicial and social institutions to redress all problems and abnormalities arising from the oppressive, dysfunctional foreign occupation we are forced to endure. We shall continue to exert the necessary efforts in this regard, with the assistance of relevant United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations on the ground, as we strive to end the Israeli occupation and to prepare for the independence of our State, where our children will be able to enjoy their human rights in freedom, peace, dignity and security, free from fear and want.

Until that goal is attained, we reiterate that the rights and needs of children living in armed conflict cannot be withheld until more amenable circumstances somehow materialize and must be safeguarded and addressed without delay. Based on our legal, moral and global obligations, collective efforts must be exerted to protect these children, provide them with assistance and rehabilitation, give them hope and ensure their well-being and ultimate survival.

We reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in protecting children, particularly through UNICEF and, in the case of Palestinian children, through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as well as through peacekeeping missions and the programmes of other United Nations agencies working with humanitarian and human rights organizations to protect and help children around the world.

Mr. Kim Bonghyun (Republic of Korea): At the outset, let me thank you, Mr. President, for organizing an open debate on this important issue. I would also like to commend the work of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to end violations against children and protect their rights. My delegation takes special note of the adoption of resolution 1882 (2009) and would also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Representative Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for their dedication to alleviating the plight of children in armed conflict around the world.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, established by the Council in its resolution 1612 (2005), as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181). In 2009, specific achievements were made with the action plans to end the recruitment of child soldiers and to secure their release from armed forces and groups signed between the United Nations and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, and the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist.

We are particularly pleased to note some significant developments in other areas, such as the release of children through the formal process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). During the reporting period, DDR efforts saw particular success in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Such programmes should be expanded wherever possible.

However, despite that progress, we remain concerned about the continued plight of children affected by armed conflict. There is still nearly unhindered impunity for grave crimes perpetrated against children in many countries covered in the report. While we note some of the steps in the right direction, including the investigations, arrests, trials and prosecutions that Governments have committed to, the issue of impunity continues to prevail. Thus, the total number of prosecutions of parties listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports remains much too small at this juncture.

The Council must stand resolute and apply robust, targeted measures to confront those persistent perpetrators. In that connection, my delegation supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to consider including child recruitment and use in the mandate of all the Council's sanctions committees, including those that deal with counter-terrorism. Incorporating more expertise on child protection in the Council's sanctions committee expert groups and scaling up reporting on violations against children would be steps in the right direction.

In addition to child recruitment, many persistent violators have been responsible for committing other grave violations against children, such as rape and sexual violence. In that connection, we welcome the listing of parties that commit rape and sexual violence against children in annex II of the Secretary-General's report, pursuant to resolution 1882 (2009). However, the limited time allowed for country task forces to prepare the relevant information resulted in a more conservative list than necessary, as reflected by the low number of reported incidents of sexual violence. We look forward to future lists reflecting the depth and extent of practices on the ground in a more comprehensive way through the elaboration of effective measures to collect and verify information on sexual violence.

My delegation welcomes the progress made in the mainstreaming of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions. The work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs in developing policy directives and guidance is notable. The full coordination of all relevant bodies, including the Security Council, the Office of the Secretary-General, DPKO, political missions and humanitarian agencies, such as UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and various non-governmental organizations, is needed. We encourage the further integration of children's concerns into all mission planning instruments and processes, including through the deployment of child protection advisers to all relevant missions.

The Republic of Korea would also like to encourage all Member States to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional

Protocols and to continue to abide by applicable international law, while striving to protect children's rights. Moreover, my delegation would like to reaffirm our full support for the continued work of the International Criminal Court in the fight against impunity.

We hope that today's open debate on children and armed conflict will pave the way for more meaningful deliberations in the Security Council. Ensuring the security and the rights of the next generation is tantamount to fulfilling the mandate of the Council and the wider Organization. The Council can count on my delegation's commitment to that end. We look forward to a strong presidential statement on this consequential issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): Let me begin by congratulating Mexico on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June 2010.

The use of children in situations of armed conflict is an abhorrent practice that militates against the fundamental principles of humanity. There can be no excuse for subjecting children to the depravity and ravages of armed conflict.

I am participating in this debate today because the Secretary-General's latest report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181) mentions instances of the recruitment and use of children and systematic attacks on schools by Maoist armed groups in some parts of central and eastern India. At the outset, I should make clear that the violence being perpetrated by those groups, although completely abhorrent and condemnable, certainly does not make it a zone of armed conflict, as defined by international law. We therefore cannot accept the reporting of those incidents as falling within the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.

Having made that specific point, I would like to state that the Government of India is seized of such abhorrent acts targeting innocent children by those armed groups. We strongly condemn the despicable acts of Naxal violence and are fully committed to controlling such diabolical activities.

The Government of India, along with the concerned state Governments, has developed a holistic strategy to address Naxal issues by focusing on security, development, administration and public perception. We have initiated awareness-raising programmes through media and mass contact, including by the police through their community policing programmes. The entire Government machinery has been dutifully implementing the existing laws, including laws that prohibit child labour.

India is a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. We are, of course, fully committed to meeting our obligations under those instruments.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Bairagi (Nepal): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of June. We wish to express our sincere appreciation to you for organizing this open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict.

We have taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), and we appreciate the presentation this morning by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, on the subject. We welcome the fact that the Security Council has adopted various resolutions, including the resolution 1612 (2005), with regard to the protection and promotion of the rights of children affected by armed conflict.

Children are the most vulnerable sector of society during conflict. At times, armed outfits recruit children into their armed groups and misuse them, including through sexual abuse. The maiming and killing of children become routine features for armed groups that are bent on spreading terror in society.

National Governments should be responsible for enacting the necessary laws and enforcing them through effective mechanisms to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of children and to bring the perpetrators to justice. The international community should come forward with the needed mandate and resources to protect this vulnerable section of society during the time of conflict. Effective national measures and international cooperation are essential to curbing the persistent violations of the rights of the child and to provide remedial measures to the affected children.

What is true is that there is no short cut to address this grave problem. It has to be dealt with in a comprehensive and collaborative manner with the involvement of national Governments, the international community, civil society and all other relevant stakeholders by devising immediate actions for preventing the violators from recruiting, abusing and misusing children in conflict. In the meantime, planning for longer-term policies addressing, among others, universal access to education and health, development, care and support of every child in society, is essential to ensuring the rights of children.

After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 21 November 2006, Nepal's peace process has reached several milestones of historic importance. Carrying the peace process forward, the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist signed the action plan on 16 December 2009 for releasing minor combatants. The process of releasing began on 7 January and ended on 8 February 2010. We appreciate the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Mission in Nepal and the United Nations country team for their involvement in this process. The Government of Nepal expresses its commitment to operationalizing the national plan of action for the reintegration and rehabilitation of children affected by the armed conflict.

As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Nepal has adopted the necessary legal instruments and established a legal and administrative framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, along with its subsidiary body the Central Child Welfare Board, and its well-established network of district child welfare boards and women's development offices in all 75 districts of the country, have been implementing various programmes for the promotion of the rights of the child. Children affected in conflict and girl children have been given high priority.

Clause 7.6 of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement contains the commitment of the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist that both sides fully agree to provide special protection to the rights of children, prohibit sexual exploitation and not to recruit or use children in the armed forces. Above all, Article 22 of the 2007 Interim Constitution of Nepal guarantees that no minor shall be employed in factories, mines or any other such hazardous work or shall be used in the army, police or in conflicts.

In concluding my statement, I wish to assure the Council that the Government of Nepal is fully committed to discharging its responsibilities in a sustained manner to protect and promote the rights of children affected by armed conflict. We also believe that the de-listing process should begin sooner rather than later, as the report of the Secretary-General explicitly notes that there were no cases of recruitment or use, killing and maiming of children or sexual violence against children by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist during the reporting period.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I am sure that, under your leadership, we will have a very fruitful and successful month. I would also like to thank the delegation of Lebanon for its successful presidency of the Security Council last month.

Allow me to present my delegation's appreciation for the section regarding Iraq in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181). We also appreciate the important role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, in her direct and indirect monitoring, drawing attention to and overseeing the issue of children and armed conflict.

My delegation is pleased to make the following observations about the section on Iraq in the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181). The report covers the period of 2009, and we would like to note that the security situation in Iraq continues to improve despite the security challenges faced during the final months of last year. The security situation has witnessed many positive developments in 2010, including the following.

The lowest rate of terrorist attacks and casualties since 2003 was recorded during the first five months of 2010. This is a result of the security offensive launched by Iraqi security forces in the past three months to hunt down Al-Qaida, with a focus on the capture or killing of most of the leaders of Al-Qaida in Iraq. The most prominent leader of Al-Qaida in Iraq, the Egyptian Abu Ayyub al-Masri, and the head of the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, were killed in mid-April this year. These strikes have dispersed Al-Qaida's strength, disrupted its strategies and revealed Al-Qaida's plans to Iraqi security agencies, thus weakening its ability to finance and recruit terrorists in Iraq.

The success of the general elections, held on March 7 2010, with no major security incidents recorded, is clear evidence of the great improvement in Iraq's security situation and of the growing capabilities of Iraqi security forces to maintain order throughout the country. The Secretary-General mentions this fact in his latest report to the Security Council on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in which he notes that

> "the overall environment in which the poll was conducted was relatively free of violence and without any major security incidents that affected the polling itself" (*S/2010/240, para. 6*)

and that

> "the Iraqi security forces have demonstrated their increased capacity to assume greater security responsibilities, evidenced by their successful maintenance of security during the March elections" (*ibid., para. 16*).

The report does not mention the efforts made in various fields by the Iraqi Government's in cooperation with UNAMI, or the cooperation between UNAMI's Office of Human Rights and the Iraqi Government. Regarding what the report now before the Council calls in paragraph 81 the "continuing recruitment of children by armed groups", that was based on information from police and military sources, community members, the media and United Nations partners — sources with vastly different levels of credibility. Although the report states in paragraph 81 that information was provided by the "Multi-National Force-Iraq" in Kirkuk in 2009, I would like to note that this force no longer exists and that its mandate expired under resolution 1859 (2008), adopted on 22 December 2008.

Paragraph 82 of the report indicates that, since the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, 142 cases of violence were recorded, but states that only 10 of these cases were actually confirmed. Additionally, reports of the Secretary-General in 2009 did not refer to any serious cases of violence recorded by the mechanism, which was implemented in Iraq in April 2009, suggesting that inaccurate information has been included in a report of such importance.

The cases of abuse indicated in paragraph 83 of the report lack source attribution, particularly the information submitted regarding a bus transporting children to a child care centre adjacent to the Ministry of Justice, in which the driver and 24 children were killed and six children injured in the bombings that took place on 25 October 2009, in which the Ministry of Justice and the offices of Baghdad province were targeted.

Paragraph 83 of the report describes the 25 October 2009 attacks on Baghdad as carried out by insurgents. The report does not clearly mention that these were terrorist attacks, despite the fact that the Secretary-General strongly condemned the attacks in his report contained in document S/2009/585 as "senseless and indiscriminate" and that Security Council press release SC/9775 condemned these attacks in the strongest terms and described them as a series of terrorist attacks.

In paragraph 84, the report notes a number of children who have been arrested and convicted. There is a big difference between arrest and conviction. Every country of the world condemns the imprisonment of children who have been convicted, and Iraq is no exception. That paragraph also refers to people between 15 and 18 years of age as children. However, according to international standards, people aged 18 are considered adults and should not be included in the report.

Paragraph 84 of the report mentions the arrest of 62 male adolescents. However, the term "adolescent" encompasses a broad category, including young adults. Also, the paragraph includes the word "allegations" and the phrase "significant numbers", which we find to be inaccurate and lacking in credibility when the sources of information are considered. We therefore believe that they should not be included in this important report.

As I have said, my Government views the section on Iraq contained in this report to be inaccurate in its monitoring the situation of children in Iraq. The information it contains contradicts some information contained in reports of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) that indicate an improvement in the security situation in Iraq. In the future, especially after the clear and significant improvements made in the security situation, we hope to enable the Office of the Special Representative, in cooperation with UNAMI, to provide more accurate information in order to give a clear picture to the States members of the Security Council.

With regard to the promotion and protection of children's rights in Iraq, the Iraqi Government has made a number of efforts, of which I would like to inform the members of the Security Council.

Constitutional guarantees and Iraq's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child form the basic framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child in my country. Children were the group most affected by changes in human rights conditions as a result of the terrorist attacks that struck the country in recent years.

Our child welfare body comprises the institutional structure for the protection of the rights of the child in Iraq. That body is made up of several parties from various ministries linked to the welfare of Iraqi children. It has taken on the responsibility for implementing policies to improve the status of children by carrying out inspection visits to all childcare centres in Iraq. Iraq is prepared to submit its national report with regard to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as its reports concerning the Additional Protocols to the Convention.

The final draft of the Iraqi Parliament's child project has been finalized and is currently before the Council of Ministers. Iraq is implementing a joint project, in cooperation with UNICEF, UNAMI and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), to strengthen protection and justice for children and young people in Iraq. In cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNFPA and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Iraq is proceeding with a project to promote civic values and life skills for young people through education.

Government institutions that deal with children in Iraq are continuously working to reduce child labour through inspections, control units and the establishment of specialized centres throughout Iraq. The Government is working to reduce the number of homeless children through field follow-ups and placement in Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs foster care programmes. That effort to provide them with basic needs aims to prevent their exploitation by terrorist groups.

Social welfare homes for children with special needs have been established in all governorates of Iraq. All placements are followed up by regular visits by an inspector from the child welfare body.

The Government of Iraq aims to promote a culture of children's rights, in particular through school programmes and the adoption of measures to prevent violence against children, in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution.

In her speech this morning, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy said, "In some wars, we find children being used as suicide bombers; there were seven such cases in Afghanistan and several in Iraq in 2009". I would like to make the following points with regard to that statement.

Iraq, like any country, works continuously to maintain and improve security and stability and safeguard them from the threat posed by certain terrorist groups. Iraq is not a country at war. We have found no evidence of even a single case in 2009 in which a child was used in a suicide attack. We would appreciate it if Ms. Coomaraswamy could provide evidence of the several cases she mentioned in her briefing. Her citing of several cases to the Council is inaccurate, vague and misleading.

Similarly in her statement, Ms. Hilde Johnson, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, made several points about Iraq that need to be addressed. After citing Iraq, Ms. Johnson spoke about her colleagues in the field in situations where there is no rule of law. Ms. Johnson made that statement despite the fact that Iraq is a constitutional parliamentary democracy where freedom, human rights and the rule of law are paramount. As Ms. Coomaraswamy did in her statement, Ms. Johnson classified Iraq with countries in situations of armed conflict. Iraq is neither a country at war nor in a situation of armed conflict. Unlike in other countries where the number of United States forces is being increased, the agreement between the Government of Iraq and the United States of America to fully withdraw combat forces by the end of August 2010 is proof that Iraq is neither a country at war nor one in armed conflict, as mentioned in the statements by Ms. Coomaraswamy and Ms. Johnson.

I would like to conclude by expressing our thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, her Office and her team for their efforts. We will continue to cooperate with United Nations bodies to ensure human rights in general and the rights of the child in particular as priorities of the Iraqi Government.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The Nordic countries are heartened that, during the past few years, the number of conflicts in which child soldiers have been used has decreased. International attention and efforts to eliminate the use of child soldiers and alleviate the suffering of children in situations of armed conflict have intensified. This is largely due to the excellent work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. We would like to reiterate our deep appreciation for her tireless efforts to call perpetrators to account and to further develop the international mechanisms to bring an end to this scourge. We would also like to take this opportunity to commend UNICEF for its worldwide efforts to ensure the protection of all children, including through its leadership of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

At the same time, we have to note that the positive developments have less to do with the efforts of the international community than with the fact that certain armed conflicts in which the use of child soldiers had persisted have come to an end. It is particularly disheartening that human rights violations against children are repeated when new crises and armed conflicts flare up. We need to address the root causes of such violations and put an end to human rights abuses.

I wish to focus my remarks today on three issues that the Secretary-General has emphasized in his recommendations to the Council. The first is strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to gather information to ensure that the Council gets timely, accurate and verified information from complex situations on the ground. The second is allowing the United Nations to work with non-State actors in addressing grave violations against children to ensure that action is taken when violations have been reported. The third is how to take decisive action in cases where violations persist despite repeated condemnations.

The Nordic countries appreciate the fact that, for the first time, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181) lists parties that have committed either sexual violence or killed or maimed children. The capacity needed for gathering, verifying and analysing the information on these crimes is recognized in the report. The Nordic countries support what the Secretary-General in his report calls a conservative approach taken this year in determining the parties to be listed for these violations and the self-critical approach in acknowledging the difficulties in information collection. For us, this demonstrates that the Office of the Special Representative, the country task forces and all relevant United Nations and non-United Nations partners are guided by very high standards of accuracy and verification, despite the often complex situations on the ground.

Nordic countries — both Governments and civil society — have been committed supporters of UNICEF since its establishment. UNICEF leads the work of the existing 14 monitoring and reporting mechanisms on the ground. We are encouraged by the good cooperation between UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative. We would like to see a similar close relationship develop with actors working on women and peace and security, in particular the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also support the involvement of child protection specialists in the preparation and planning of peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions, as well as systematic inclusion of Child Protection Advisers in all peacekeeping operations and political and peacebuilding missions.

Information on grave violations is not collected and verified for the sake of having the information but for action to be taken in response, in order to make a difference to children's lives. We welcome the fact that in the course of last year the development of and agreement to action plans by three non-State armed groups has led to the demobilization of several thousand child soldiers. These action plans are a strong example of why allowing contacts between the United

Nations and non-State actors for the purposes of addressing grave violations of children's rights is so crucial. We join the call of the Secretary-General on all Governments concerned to allow the United Nations to work with non-State actors for effective protection of children.

The presence of the Afghan National Police on the list in annex I of the report of the Secretary-General represents a special case for the Nordic countries. Several Nordic countries actively support the Afghan National Police as part of the effort to enhance the human rights and security situation in the country. We are encouraged by the steps taken so far by the Afghan Government to address the issue of recruitment of children, and we stand ready to support the Afghan National Police to that end.

Unfortunately, there are also cases where the Security Council does not lack information but where the violations continue nonetheless. The Nordic countries express great concern that parties continue to commit grave violations, and we appreciate that for the first time the Secretary-General's report has a separate list of persistent violators: those parties to a conflict who have been listed for grave violations against children for five or more consecutive years. The Nordic countries believe it is time for the Security Council to step up its response against these persistent violators. It should also consider more effective measures in response to grave violations in general. We support the proposals of the Secretary-General to include child recruitment and its use in the mandate of all sanctions committees, to improve the flow of information between the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the sanctions committees and to invite the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to regularly brief the sanctions committees.

In this regard we have been encouraged to hear that the Special Representative was recently invited to brief the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we hope that the Security Council will decide to make this a regular practice.

Lastly, the fight against impunity, including through our continuing support for the International Criminal Court, is of course both a preventive and a responsive measure to combat grave violations against children.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month and to thank you for having convened this meeting. Your Foreign Minister's presence here today reflects Mexico's enduring commitment to advancing the international agenda on this issue. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2010/181) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her briefing this morning.

More than half of Afghanistan's 30 million people are under the age of 18. This is a half of the country whose earliest memories are of violence and war and who have grown up amidst a decimated economy, shattered institutions and a broken society. But these children are also the best and only hope for the future of Afghanistan, and my Government is fully committed to protecting them and to developing their potential.

A country of youth poses unique challenges. Thirty years of warfare have left thousands orphaned or disabled. Mines and unexploded remnants of war kill or injure hundreds more every year. Many children are the primary breadwinners for their families. Poverty, unemployment and weak national institutions create unrest and particularly disadvantage children, putting them at risk of disease and malnutrition and making them easy victims for crimes and extremist ideologies. But more than this, children in Afghanistan suffer from the terrorism and violence of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and their allies. These groups are responsible for heinous acts against civilians, including the recent heartbreaking murder of a 7-year-old boy, hanged as a Government spy. Their complete disregard for human life is well documented, and they continue to bear overwhelming responsibility for the danger to children across the country.

The Government of Afghanistan has taken many legal, institutional and practical steps to promote security, development and good governance and to fulfil its national and international obligations to protect children. In addition, as part of an ongoing dialogue with the Office of the Special Representative, and in line with the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Government of Afghanistan has taken further steps to address the particular needs of children in armed conflict. Many of these are not fully reflected in the current report, so I will give a number of examples.

First, my Government welcomed the recent creation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the country and established an international and inter-ministerial steering committee to develop a governmental action plan on children and armed conflict.

Second, the Government has established a commission to oversee the needs of children and juveniles, and another to ensure the observance of human rights during detention and interrogation, as required by law.

Third, the Government is working with civil society and religious leaders to address sexual violence, which is contrary to both Islamic teachings and national law.

Fourth, because of the threat from the Taliban, the Ministry of Education has instructed that schools will no longer be used as polling stations in elections.

Fifth, the Government is engaged with international forces to improve protection of civilians and has welcomed recent tactical directives in that regard.

Sixth, focal points for child recruitment have been identified in the Ministries of the Interior and Defence, and the Ministry of the Interior has tasked its unit on human rights, gender and children to address any allegations of children serving in the police, as well as allegations of sexual violence.

Seventh, the recruitment process for both the army and the police is being increasingly centralized and standardized, including through the introduction of biometric verification procedures. Records are kept of underage applicants who are turned away.

Eighth, the Interior Ministry recently released an executive directive reinforcing the existing legislation by banning recruitment by the police of anyone under 18, requiring that any children found be reintegrated into society within 30 days and mandating disciplinary measures for those responsible.

Given those steps and others that we have taken, my Government is disturbed by the decision to list the Afghan National Police force in annex I of the report of the Secretary-General. As the Special Representative herself has recognized, our recruitment policy is clearly designed to prevent children from being involved with the security forces. This decision creates an unacceptable equivalence between the police and the intentionally abusive practices of the Taliban and their allies and undermines the efforts of the Afghan Government and the international community to build strong, effective and responsible security forces in very challenging circumstances.

I have outlined my Government's concerns more fully in a letter to the Secretary-General on this subject, which will be published as an official document of the Security Council. In particular, my Government was not provided with any evidence to support the report's allegations of child recruitment in the police or of mistreatment or torture in Government facilities in violation of international law. We are not satisfied with the partial and anecdotal nature of the report itself.

However, despite our reservations, my Government remains ready as always to engage fully with the Office of the Special Representative and with the monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure the full implementation of resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), among others, and to continue to improve our capacity and procedures for the protection of children.

Earlier this week we became aware of vast mineral resources in Afghanistan that have the power to transform the country's economy. Likewise, the millions of children in Afghanistan are an untapped wealth of human potential who will grow into an economic, political and social force that will remake the future of the country. My Government is fully committed to educating those children, protecting them, providing them with a bright and promising future and building a country that they can be proud to inherit. That is not just a moral and legal duty; it is also the only way for Afghanistan to fully and finally emerge from conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Let me begin by joining previous speakers in extending our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on a very important issue.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2010/181). We also would like to express our thanks to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Assistant Secretary-General Atul Khare and Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson of UNICEF for their respective briefings, as well as to Ms. Manju Gurung for her moving testimony.

There is no doubt that progress has been made in better protecting children in armed conflict. This progress is indeed an encouraging sign. However, despite the advances, children remain victims and targets in many instances. That is truly regrettable. Civilians must be protected at all times: in times of peace and in times of war. This must be emphasized to all parties. It must be made clear to warring parties.

Governments, even in the most complex of situations, have and will always have the main responsibility for providing protection and relief for children. The first and most important step in protecting children is in the prevention of conflict itself. It is essential to build the capacities that can assist Governments in resolving challenges non-violently in order to prevent the outbreak of war.

The task of protecting children during armed conflict becomes more complex every day. The ease with which small arms and sophisticated weapons can be delivered makes our efforts more difficult. It is even more daunting to protect the rights of children in such complex circumstances. Before their rights can be truly protected and promoted, children must first be extracted from armed conflict. It is unrealistic to discuss protecting their rights when parties are at war and children are in the midst of it. Children must never be involved in armed conflicts.

Efforts to protect former child soldiers and child victims should be conducted beyond the framework of security or rights-based issues. Any strategy to resolve armed conflict needs to take into account the reintegration of these children into society through programmatic responses at the community level, in order to increase opportunities for children to participate in society. For that reason, Indonesia has been steadfast in its position that this issue should also be discussed within the social, economic and developmental framework. The Security Council, in cooperation with other United Nations entities and regional organizations, can play a role in guaranteeing the achievement of this objective.

With regard to the report of the Secretary-General, we would wish to see more systematic and focused reporting on the resolutions. Reporting beyond the scope of the annexes should take into account the quality, reliability and objectivity of the information provided, based on the monitoring and reporting mechanism, as stipulated in resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009).

Protection of children is the ultimate objective. It is therefore imperative that any consideration of imposing targeted and incremental measures on persistent perpetrators as a last resort should take into account the vulnerabilities of children and avoid unintended consequences to children.

We also wish to underline that extensive consultation with the countries concerned should be further strengthened so as to ensure that the recommendations are implementable and their goals realistic. Furthermore, we call upon the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to develop and refine a clear exit strategy for countries or parties to be de-listed from the annexes. Such an exit strategy would not only further clarify the steps that the parties need to take, but would also provide transparency and quell doubts about the work of the Office of the Special Representative and the Working Group; that is important if the process is to be seen as legitimate and fair.

To conclude, we recognize the call to address the challenges children face in armed conflicts on an equal footing with gender issues. It is indeed advisable that the work of gender experts be integrated with that of Child Protection Advisers, particularly in the future efforts of peacekeeping missions. War does not make distinctions based on gender. Boys and girls are equally traumatized and victimized by war. Thus, they need the same protection. Efforts by the Security Council should be to save lives without regard to gender, ensure that warring parties lay down their arms, and establish peace and security, as mandated by the United Nations Charter.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate Ambassador Heller on his work in the presidency of the Security Council and on the excellent work that the delegation of Mexico has done at the helm of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005). We also thank him for convening today's discussion on the important topic of children and armed conflict.

Chile aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Human Security Network and the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Canada in his capacity as chair of the Group of Friends for children in armed conflict.

The international community recognizes that children have rights, yet their rights are ignored every day in situations of armed conflict. We therefore reiterate our firm support for the work of the Working Group and for efforts to implement, among other measures, Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), co-sponsored by Chile. We also reiterate our support for UNICEF and the various non-governmental organizations and civil society bodies that work together to contribute to the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

Similarly, we acknowledge the significant and selfless work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her team. We are following with particular interest their activities in the field, which have made Member States aware of the serious situations facing child victims of armed conflicts.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and to Convention 182 of the International Labour Organization concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, Chile reiterates its commitment to initiatives to eliminate all forms of violence against children and to the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, known as the Paris Principles.

Accordingly, we support multilateral actions to reduce and eradicate this scourge by focusing on greater programmatic coherence, ensuring reintegration is sustainable, punishing those responsible and promoting prevention activities designed to protect childhood and the special needs of girl children in armed conflicts. Ten years after the adoption of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we therefore call on those States that have not yet acceded to these instruments to consider ratifying them promptly.

We have read with interest the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), in particular that encouraging the Security Council to streamline the sharing of information between its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and its sanctions committees and to invite the Special Representative to brief those bodies on a more regular basis on specific information that comes under her remit. In this connection, in accordance with paragraph 194 of that report, we urge the continued inclusion of specific child protection provisions in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and relevant political missions, the permanent deployment of child protection advisers and the training of contingents in child protection.

The prevention and eradication of violence against children in armed conflicts will be possible only if the Council uses the full weight of its authority to identify and punish those responsible for the worst violations of human rights — those who violate the rights of the most fragile and defenceless. We therefore call on the Security Council to consider more forceful action against those who commit serious and persistent violations against children and to consider measures that could be applied in cases where there are no sanctions committees.

Finally, in the framework of resolution 1882 (2009), we underscore the importance of ensuring that the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has the administrative support necessary to carrying out its work effectively, given that it is the only subsidiary body of the Council that does not receive such assistance. We also urge the Group to use the tools at its disposal, particularly on-site visits and emergency meetings.

Almost 14 years after the publication of the historic report of Graça Machel on children and armed conflict, and 10 years after the adoption of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Chile renews its commitment to contributing actively to the elimination of all forms of violence affecting the children of the world, ranging from armed conflicts to urban violence. Inspired by the phrase penned by the Chilean Nobel Laureate Gabriela Mistral, "the future of children is always today; tomorrow will be too late", we will steadfastly support all initiatives seeking to implement the international commitments in this area.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Mrs. Horváth Fekszi (Hungary): The Republic of Hungary welcomes this open debate and the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181). I should like to express my gratitude to Mexico for its work as chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. I should also like to convey our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for their comprehensive contribution to the protection of children in armed conflict and for bringing this issue to the forefront of the international agenda.

The Republic of Hungary fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European delegation on behalf of the European Union.

The Government of the Republic of Hungary strongly supports resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009) and the implementation of an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism on violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict. We attach special importance to the expansion of the triggers for listing, in particular sexual violence, killing and maiming. We share concerns regarding the alarming issue of systematic sexual violence being used as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians, including women and children. Such infamous assaults significantly aggravate armed conflict and post-conflict situations, and their lasting negative impact may seriously impede the recovery process. In this regard, we should spare no effort to take effective steps to respond, and ultimately to put an end, to such acts and any kind of violence against children, both girls and boys, and women, with a special emphasis on sexual violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations.

Furthermore, we believe that the work of the sanctions committees constitutes a significant step towards implementing the relevant resolutions and other international documents.

It is my pleasure to announce that the Republic of Hungary deposited the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict with the United Nations on 24 February 2010, and I should like to reaffirm that my Government is fully committed to the principles and norms of the relevant international instruments. We welcome and firmly support the campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was launched on 25 May.

The Republic of Hungary strongly encourages the Council to continue its work to fight against the recruitment of child soldiers, while taking into consideration the recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General in the current report. I should like to assure the Council once again of the Republic of Hungary's commitment to and engagement on enhancing the protection of children in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset I would like to thank Ms. Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, for having organized this debate. It demonstrates the special interest that Mexico attaches to the issue of children in armed conflict. For more than a year now, Mr. President, your country has been chairing the Security Council Working Group on this issue, and the international community can only welcome the manner in which your delegation in New York has assumed its responsibilities. A single delegation cannot sustainably chair such a Working Group without long-term support. I thus take this opportunity to request the Secretary-General to provide the Working Group as soon as possible with the administrative support the Security Council has called for.

I also would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2010/181). My thanks go also to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Atul Khare of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. I also stress the courage of Ms. Manju Gurung, who kindly spoke to the Council this morning about her experiences.

Belgium aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European

Union and by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends, which includes Belgium. On behalf of my country, I will stress a number of points related to today's debate.

Last year, two new triggers were activated — sexual violence; and killing and maiming — that have strengthened the protection of children throughout the world. This also created a new challenge, which the Special Representative and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict have been determined to address vigorously.

While thus far it has been relatively easy to define the issue of mobilized and demobilized children, it is clearly more difficult to catalogue and document the cases of killing, maiming and sexual violence systematically perpetrated by parties to conflict. Without reliable collection of data on these new categories of violence, the monitoring and reporting mechanism will not function properly and it will not be possible to put credible sanctions in place. The international community, working closely with civil society — and we greatly appreciate its contribution — must roll up its sleeves. A first step has just been taken: the criteria set out in the Secretary-General's report. These will lead to greater clarity and transparency in the work of Ms. Coomaraswamy and the Working Group. The second stage is capacity-building for data collection on the ground. This should be done by streamlining and coordinating existing United Nations networks. But we must also be generous in providing greater resources to the United Nations lest our desire to act remain unrealized. In this regard, Belgium decided this year, through UNICEF, to fund capacity-building for monitoring and reporting on the ground, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan and the Sudan.

The third stage is for stringent sanctions to be adopted. As we read in the Secretary-General's report, in many countries there is almost total impunity with regard to grave crimes against children. Today we call upon the Security Council to take measures, without delay, to punish violators who have been listed for more than five years but have shown no intention to cooperate with the Special Representative. As the Secretary-General describes in his report, the Council's Working Group and sanctions committees must work together on this issue. I welcome the fact that in May the Special Representative spoke to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

And the final, critical, stage is that when children are snatched from the jaws of war they need to be reintegrated. For that, reliable financing is essential. Belgium has supported a number of projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, addressing issues including sexual violence. My delegation has thus followed with interest the efforts of France and UNICEF to mobilize donors in the area of reintegration, in line with the Paris Principles on children associated with armed forces or armed groups. Preventing recruitment and ensuring reintegration must be viewed over the long term through multi-year programmes.

This leads me to say that the problem of children in conflict goes beyond the scope of action of the Security Council. As Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on the Central African Public, I stress the very important role that the Commission too can play in mobilizing the international community and in facilitating coordination of its efforts regarding disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and raising awareness in the countries on its agenda.

As Chair of the country-specific configuration on the Central African Republic, I have established ongoing contact with Ms. Coomaraswamy and, whenever possible, I raise this issue with the authorities of the Central African Republic. In this context, our country-specific configuration had planned a December 2009 visit to a demobilization centre for child soldiers in the Central African Republic, but an armed opposition group prevented us from conducting that visit.

I close by expressing Belgium's hope that this year, the Working Group will carry out a first visit to a country of its choice, so that the Security Council may demonstrate once again that it wants to and can make a difference in defending children confronted by war.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important debate on one of the most crucial issues: children and armed conflict. I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2010/181). I am grateful too for the efforts of the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I pay tribute on behalf of the State of Qatar to the progress made through the signing of action plans with various parties to armed conflict in order to put an end to the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to ensure their release by armed forces and groups. However, despite the progress, which demonstrates the determination of the international community to deal with grave violations of the rights of children in armed conflict, we note the fragility of the international community's determination to protect children in situations of foreign occupation.

The report of the Secretary-General notes developments in the occupied Palestinian territory and indicates that 374 Palestinian children were killed and over 2,086 injured during the period covered by the report, including at least 350 killed and 1,815 injured in the Gaza Strip during the military operation launched by Israeli forces.

In Qatar, under the wise auspices of its Emir, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, we are convinced that education is the best means to control violence and ensure peace and security. We reaffirm the importance of taking measures to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-General calling upon all parties to armed conflict to respect international standards guaranteeing the protection of students, teachers and schools against attack. We also note that, despite international appeals that the educational needs of children be met during conflict, a large number of children in many regions are still deprived of education because of armed conflict. Schools, including United Nations schools, continue to be targeted by some parties to armed conflict.

Today's debate on this theme offers an opportunity to pose questions about the report of the Secretary-General's board of inquiry into the direct attacks against schools in the Gaza Strip belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Those attacks were carried out by the Israeli army. The Security Council should determine responsibility for those crimes so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice.

At a number of international forums, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser al Missned, the wife of the Emir of Qatar, who is UNESCO Special Envoy for basic and higher education, has expressed her concern about the harmful impact of armed conflict and violence on education. She has supported the Al Fakhoora Campaign, a broad international movement that seeks to promote and ensure freedom and access to education for Palestinian students in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Among its far-reaching activities, Al Fakhoora has recently announced 60 grants to Palestinian students in Gaza out of the 100 grants that the organization provides, to the amount of $100 million.

In addition, Reach Out to Asia, an international non-governmental organization under the auspices of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, is working hard to increase educational opportunities for young people and children in many countries affected by crises and natural disasters. Before the Israeli war in Gaza, together with Save the Children, the Foundation implemented a welfare programme to promote areas safe for education in the Gaza Strip. Following the war, the Foundation opened 11 schools in Gaza out of the 22 that are being equipped and renovated jointly with the International Islamic Aid Agency. The project seeks to make a real change in the lives of 21,000 students and 126,000 families living in very difficult conditions in order to restore normalcy in the Gaza Strip.

On the basis of that commitment and convinced of the importance of education in areas of conflict, the State of Qatar, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Norway are preparing a draft resolution on the right to education in crisis situations that will be submitted to the General Assembly for adoption at its current session.

Finally, we reaffirm that we in Qatar are working on this issue because we believe that children are the most important resource in creating peaceful societies. We are working with international partners to guarantee the right to education in areas of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Jayasekara (Sri Lanka): My delegation wishes to convey its appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this debate and for your delegation's leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We take note of the Secretary-

General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), which provides useful insights on how we must move forward on this important issue.

Following the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka last year, the recruitment of children by armed groups has ended. This year, one persistent violator, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) terrorist group, has been de-listed from annex II of the Secretary-General's report following its defeat and the consequent end to its abominable practice of child recruitment. The other former armed group, the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal, which entered into an action plan with UNICEF and our Government, has released children in its custody and entered the democratic process.

At the end of last year, at the invitation of our Government, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, General Patrick Cammaert, visited Sri Lanka and witnessed at first hand the progress following the end of the conflict.

It may be recalled that over a decade ago the Government of Sri Lanka voluntarily submitted the case of the LTTE for the consideration of the Working Group. We did so because our Government has a zero-tolerance policy on child recruitment and we fully condemned the recruitment of children by the LTTE.

My delegation is pleased to inform the Council that by bringing an end to the armed conflict, our Government was able to take into its care more than 570 children, some as young as 14 years of age, who had been recruited by the LTTE. As detailed in the Secretary-General's report, those children have now been put through a comprehensive rehabilitation programme by the Government, with the assistance of UNICEF, and have been returned to their communities, where they will resume normal life with their families and continue to receive community-based rehabilitation.

Throughout the military operation conducted by our armed forces to liberate civilians held as human shields by the LTTE terrorist group, our armed forces took care to ensure the safety and security of innocent civilians, including children. For that reason, nearly 300,000 civilians fled from the clutches of the LTTE and sought the protection of the armed forces.

Since the end of the conflict, our Government has provided food, shelter and medical care to those internally displaced persons (IDPs), including children, with assistance from the United Nations and other donor agencies. Special educational facilities are provided to the displaced children. Nutritional food supplements have also been provided to infants. Displaced children have been reunited with their families. Children who have lost their parents have been entrusted to Government-registered child care facilities. Protection teams of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF officials are given access to ensure the safety and security of children in IDP villages. As of today, 90 per cent of the IDPs have been resettled and only a few children remain in IDP villages, along with their families. Those who remain have freedom of movement. De-mining and the completion of reconstruction work will enable those families to return to their places of origin very soon.

My Government has demonstrated its serious commitment to a process of accountability to look into whether any violations of international norms might have taken place during the conflict and to work towards reconciliation through a process of restorative justice. Last month, we announced the appointment of a commission of inquiry, comprising eminent persons, who will look into all aspects of the conflict. The commission has since moved swiftly to get on with its task.

Our Government considers its responsibility for the protection of children and the promotion of their welfare a high priority. It is imperative for the State to ensure that children are not in danger and to prevent them from being used as accessories to violence. As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Sri Lanka provides for the well-being of children, with free education and free health care. We have established the National Child Protection Authority, with wide-ranging powers to deal with all issues that affect the well-being of our children. We also have a separate ministry that focuses on providing the resources to implement programmes aimed at securing the rights of children.

The Secretary-General's report pursuant to resolution 1882 (2009) has rather vaguely and incoherently outlined the criteria for de-listing groups in its annexes. While the practice of recruiting children is abominable and is unreservedly condemned, it is important to give confidence and build trust in post-conflict societies by de-listing groups that have released children in their custody, rather than dawdling over technical aspects of the criteria.

Therefore, we suggest that the criteria for de-listing be clarified so that the groups that have already complied with the resolutions or have ceased recruitment can be quickly de-listed. We recognize the need for continued engagement by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in post-conflict societies to ensure long-term peace and stability and with a view to ensuring that there is no re-recruitment or resurgence of violence.

We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, rape and other grave sexual violence against children in armed conflict. There should be no place for such grave violations. We must find effective means to ensure that all actors abide by such principles. Throughout the conflict in Sri Lanka, our disciplined security forces ensured that there were no incidents of that nature.

It is pertinent to recall that the primary obligation for complying with the resolutions lies with Member States themselves. We need to set higher standards for ourselves, inasmuch as we expect non-State actors to do so. We urge all Member States to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We urge the Security Council to consider targeted measures against persistent perpetrators of grave violations. The Secretary-General's report highlights the fact that persistent violators need to be dealt with in order to enforce our commitment to protecting children. Initiatives of the Security Council to address the issue of children and armed conflict and efforts by the Council Working Group on the subject must be made to focus more on the real issues underlying the recruitment of children. Tangible international action, as opposed to mere expressions of concern, is needed.

My delegation appreciates the contribution of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and her Office. We remain committed to continuing our close cooperation with the Special Representative and with United Nations agencies including UNICEF.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the initiative of Mexico to convene this important open debate and for the personal dedication and leadership of Ambassador Heller in chairing the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Slovenia fully aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by the acting head of the delegation of the European Union, by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Human Security Network and by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of children and armed conflict.

We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the other distinguished guests for their presentations today. My delegation was particularly touched by the testimony, this morning, of a former child soldier, Manju Gurung. We sincerely commend her for her courage and strength, and we wish her all the best.

A great deal of progress has been made since the issue of children and armed conflict was put on the United Nations agenda. However, as we have heard today, the situation of children in some parts of the world is still alarming, and the international community is faced with new challenges in addressing the issue of children and armed conflict. We have noted with regret that new parties engaged in the recruitment of children have been added to the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181).

Slovenia welcomes the latest report and the recommendations contained in it. Stronger steps should be taken to address accountability and end impunity for perpetrators of violations, especially with respect to those groups and individuals who persistently commit grave violations against children and have been listed in the report for more than five years. Slovenia is convinced that the work of the International Criminal Court and other international tribunals will help break the culture of impunity for such crimes.

In this respect, we particularly support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to include child recruitment and use in the mandate of all its sanctions committees, to streamline the sharing of information between the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and its sanctions committees, and to ensure briefings by the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to the sanctions committees.

We also believe that specific provisions for the protection of children should continue to be included in the mandates of all relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as political and peacebuilding missions, including by means of the deployment of Child Protection Advisers. We welcome the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in mainstreaming child protection into peacekeeping missions.

Following the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1882 (2009) and 1888 (2009), it is important to improve collection and verification of data on sexual violence against children and to develop the capacity to document incidents and trends on killing, maiming and sexual violence against children. We have also noted the recommendation in the report that in order to ensure the broad and effective protection of children, including for the purposes of preparing action plans, contacts between the United Nations and non-State actors should be allowed.

The issue of children and armed conflict, as a cross-cutting issue, needs a comprehensive approach, where human rights, security and development go hand in hand. It is important to efficiently and sustainably address the short-, medium- and long-term impacts of armed conflicts on children in an effective and comprehensive manner. It is therefore not only essential that children be released by armed forces and groups and returned to their families and communities, but it is essential also to address their psychosocial well-being and to ensure their development and their future without fear or threats of recruitment or the commission of other grave violations against them.

This year the Security Council celebrates the fifth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), which established the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Moreover, we are commemorating the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We fully support the campaign for universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention. We welcome and encourage further cooperation among the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF, other relevant bodies and civil society.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to encourage the Security Council to continue to address the issue of children and armed conflict and to seek the most effective means to improve the situation of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): At the outset I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mexico on its assumption of the Security Council presidency. I would also like to directly thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico for her personal dedication to the issue of children and armed conflict and for arranging this open debate. Additionally, I would like to thank and commend the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF for working to submit an inclusive and well-grounded report (S/2010/181) on the actual situation facing and involving children in areas of concern. The fact that the information contained in the report is disaggregated by country and type of violation gives us a clear picture of the magnitude of this horrific and all too common phenomenon.

Kazakhstan, as a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, fully supports the strengthening of multilateral commitments through the campaign launched by the Secretary-General to promote its universal ratification by 2012. It is crucial that all nations fully and legally embrace the Optional Protocol if we are to protect and uphold the right of all children to be children and to grow up in safer, healthier and friendlier environments. Regrettably, a number of countries covered in the present report have not ratified the Optional Protocol, including some where a legal framework for child protection is most needed. Kazakhstan feels that this makes full implementation of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), regarding the incorporation of tracking and the eradication of sexual violence into existing national action plans, of immediate and vital importance.

The report indicates undeniable progress in monitoring and preventing many violations and abuses against children in armed conflict, as well as some progress in holding those committing these hideous crimes against children accountable for their actions.

However, the conclusion that impunity for violators continues to prevail is indeed, as stated in the report, disturbing.

Based on the data presented, we can conclude that direct bilateral dialogue with armed groups and the implementation of concrete time-bound action plans by all parties to a conflict constitute an efficient and effective framework for significantly reducing the number of grave violations against children. Our delegation appreciates the political will of countries affected by conflict that have nominated local citizens to be responsible for facilitating the separation and demobilization of children, and those instances where child protection units have been established in armed groups. Such precedents have added value in the light of the lack of trained and qualified personnel responsible for child survival, demobilization and reintegration. It is evident that these precedents should become best practices for the United Nations and all parties to conflicts to follow.

Kazakhstan is deeply concerned that some countries have shown resistance to providing access for United Nations country teams to monitor and report on conditions in areas of conflict. This includes contact with non-State actors for the purpose of preparing action plans to stop the recruitment of children and other grave violations, including killing, maiming and rape. We call on all countries to grant unrestricted access to the United Nations to gather objective and reliable information, and to prepare critical action plans to protect children.

The report mentions the innovative domestic law in the United States, the Child Soldier Prevention Act, which restricts the provision of financing and any defence-related assistance to countries identified as recruiting or using child soldiers in violation of international humanitarian law. This national approach should be applauded and, where appropriate, replicated. The loss of military support and aid could serve as strong motivating factors for some to stop these disgraceful practices against children.

As a member of the UNICEF Executive Board, Kazakhstan fully supports the Fund's new mandate as co-lead in the struggle to end violence against children in situations of armed conflict. In these efforts, it is critical to focus on educating all sides in a conflict, as well members of peacekeeping units, on the rights of civilians, particularly children and women. National and international legislation should be strengthened i order to fill legal gaps and loopholes exploited b those violating these rights.

The increase of forced school closures and o schools being damaged or destroyed in attacks fighting or explosions is of deep concern to ou delegation. While targeting schools clearly put children at direct risk of death and injury, it also result in their being deprived of education and, potentially the loss of an entire generation. Such an outcom would be fertile ground for fanaticism and terrorism and therefore represent a threat to international peac and security.

Kazakhstan suggests further prioritizing th protection of educational facilities from attack by an party and the provision of uninterrupted education fo all children in post-conflict zones, where appropriat My delegation also proposes the drafting of large-scal learning policies for countries affected by long-tern armed conflicts. The goal of these proposals is to hel today's children grow into a generation free fron hatred and loathing based on race, culture or religion By promoting dignity, tolerance and a merit-base approach, education is a cornerstone of efforts t eradicate deep-rooted stereotypes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give th floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Lomaia (Georgia): I thank you, Sir, fo having convened this open debate on the importan topic of children and armed conflict.

At the outset, I should like to commend th Secretary-General for his ninth report on this issu (S/2010/181). I should also like to express ou gratitude to the Special Representative of th Secretary-General for her comprehensive presentation.

My delegation supports the statement made o behalf of the European Union.

Since 1999, the issue of children and arme conflict has been a permanent fixture on the agenda o the Security Council. Over the past decade, the Counci has adopted seven resolutions on this matter, but we al know that these measures are not enough. As we hav learned from the report of the Secretary-General' before us, the haunting reality remains that children ar being brutally affected by military conflicts around th world. Any conflict in which children suffer directl from violence and brutality, or secondarily from the consequences, requires much closer attention from the international community.

Over the past several months, Member States have had an opportunity to address the protection of civilians at various open debates here in this Chamber. As many present know, this is an issue of great concern to Georgia. The Council heard an update on the two occupied regions of my country, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, also known as South Ossetia. Georgian children have suffered in both these regions, but the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict does not cover that part of the world this year, and so I felt it important to remind the Council of the humanitarian aspects of this situation.

While the active conflict is considered to be over, the problems that we discussed last year remain and, in certain respects, have even worsened. The demolition of school buildings, the denial of the right to receive education in the native language, the forcible conscription of young men and sometimes teenagers, and hindered access to education and opportunity are but a few of the problems facing the young people of these regions while under foreign occupation.

Our children have been given new textbooks printed in another country and approved by the education ministry of that country — textbooks their parents and community leaders have no ability to review. Children are no longer allowed to attend schools on the other side of the artificially imposed administrative boundary lines, creating divisions and isolation where before there was community and shared learning and experiences. Georgian citizens are being forced to learn the Russian language and given no choice about their preference or their future. They are told that their identity, their language and their culture are lesser than those of the occupying force.

There are many documented cases to which we could refer to illustrate these charges and flesh out a picture of how civilian life is being supplanted by the military occupation. Many know the details of these cases already. Every time I come here to address the Council, I am amazed that I can list such examples in the twenty-first century.

In Tskhinvali in December 2009, six children between 12 and 16 years of age were detained and charged with "terrorist activities". Only after active intervention by the international community were these children released. This incident is not an exception to the rule, but rather the reality that is faced every day. There might not be what we qualify here as an active conflict, but our citizens battle every day for their basic rights and freedoms.

A first step towards addressing this problem would be to allow unhindered humanitarian access, which could protect and assist those affected by armed conflicts — children, first and foremost. In reference to another situation, the report of the Secretary-General emphasizes "humanitarian access in general has vastly deteriorated during the year". One could not better describe the practice of blocking access for humanitarian aid and international humanitarian actors to the occupied Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, which has been in effect since August 2008. This is a clear violation of the principles of international law; of paragraph 3 of the six-point ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 brokered by the European Union; and of paragraph 4 of the General Assembly resolution 63/307 on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, of 9 September 2009.

I would ask everyone here to help us defend the rights of our children, including their right to a peaceful and prosperous future. I should also like to take this opportunity to commend the tireless efforts undertaken by UNICEF in my country, including its activities in Abkhazia.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Council that my Government stands ready to continue to cooperate with the entire United Nations family to defend the interests of all children affected by the August war and the ongoing foreign military occupation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Australia.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for Mexico's continuing leadership on this critical matter.

Australia appreciates this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to what must be a robust international framework to address the situation of children in armed conflict. As a member of the Group of Friends for children and armed conflict, we are pleased to associate ourselves with statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group.

Australia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181). For the first time, as we know, the report lists parties to conflict on the basis of sexual violence and killing and maiming. In the four months of the reporting period in which those triggers for listing were activated, 10 parties were listed on those grounds. That figure, and the fact that the numbers for listing on those bases could be higher in future reporting periods, is obviously of very serious concern.

All parties to conflict must take urgent action to address those and other grave violations against children. For that reason, the names of persistent violators should continue to be published. The Council should utilize the full range of tools available to it and take vigilant measures in response to these grave and ongoing violations. Those who abuse children in times of conflict simply must not go unpunished. We support the Secretary-General's call for improved synergies between the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and its sanctions committees. The Secretary-General's recommendation to include the issue of children in armed conflict in the mandates of all relevant sanctions committees is also welcome, as is his proposal to include child protection advisers in the expert groups that inform them. Ms. Coomaraswamy's briefing on 21 May to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo set a very positive precedent in that regard.

Positive signs of progress in the Secretary-General's report are a testament to the real change that the Council mechanism can effect, in particular the recent release of children in Nepal and the signing by parties in Nepal and the Philippines of time-bound action plans. We express our hope that those and other such action plans will be translated into genuine action on the ground. We reaffirm our own readiness to support national efforts to do so.

Australia is pleased to assist the United Nations and other partners to address the situation of children in armed conflict in very practical ways — particularly in Asia, where a significant portion of the work of the Council mechanism is focused. The value of identifying best practices and developing field manuals and training toolkits must be recognized, particularly to help identify tangible ways United Nations country teams can address children's welfare. UNICEF's June 2009 all-African workshop was an excellent initiative in that regard, and we were pleased to support it.

We value our continued partnership with UNICEF in this area, including in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and the Philippines. The news of the recent release of the last Sri Lankan former child soldiers from rehabilitation centres demonstrates the capabilities of the Council mechanism. That those former child soldiers will be provided with the skills and opportunities that they will need to forge a sustainable future is particularly pleasing. With Sri Lanka now looking towards a more hopeful future, we trust that those children represent a new beginning for their country.

In the Philippines, Australia supports UNICEF in providing education for children in areas affected by armed conflict. We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's finding that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front has taken measures to operationalize its action plan within its ranks, thereby translating words into action.

Measures taken by Thailand to protect the safety and enhance the development of children in its southern border provinces are to be commended, including its efforts to significantly reduce attacks on schools, which is a grave violation against children. Effective information on the prevalence of this violation and strategies for prevention are clearly crucial.

Of course, the gains that have been made must not obscure the fact that there is much more work to be done. The continued inability of the United Nations to gain access to non-State groups in Myanmar in order to make progress in discussions on action plans remains of particular concern. That being said, we recognize that the International Labour Organization continues to have a positive and effective presence on ground in Myanmar. We are pleased to see in the Secretary-General's report that continued operation of the supplemental understanding complaints mechanism has produced some results for the protection of children in Myanmar's conflict areas.

In conclusion, Australia welcomes the improvements reported by the Secretary-General. But, along with many other Council members, we caution that further robust efforts and commitments by all Member States are essential. The failure to protect and rehabilitate children from harm and exploitation in situations of armed conflict simply condemns us all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important open debate on children and armed conflict and for your submission of a concept paper on this topic (S/2010/314). Let me also convey our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), which reviews developments in a number of situations of concern and stresses the progress made and the remaining challenges. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her comprehensive presentation, as well as the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF for their briefings on the matter.

Azerbaijan aligns itself with the statement delivered today on behalf of the European Union by the acting head of the European Union delegation to the United Nations. I would like to make a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

We reiterate our commitment to continuing to contribute to the activities of existing United Nations mechanisms and other relevant organizations and agencies with the aim of ensuring more effective protection of child rights and improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict. We commend the significant and successful work done under the leadership of Ambassador Heller of Mexico as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Azerbaijan's interest in the topic under consideration is obvious and stems from its practical experience in addressing the impact on children of the armed aggression against my country and in engaging international efforts to ensure respect by the relevant Member State of its obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law.

The war unleashed against my country and its consequences exert considerable influence, inter alia, on the humanitarian aspect of the problem, and primarily affect the most vulnerable groups. Azerbaijan continues to suffer one of the highest proportions of refugees and displaced persons in the world, large numbers of whom are children. The most serious international offences have been committed in the course of the conflict. Even children have not been spared. Of the more than 4,000 people reported missing in connection with the conflict, 48 are children.

In recent years, the issue of children and armed conflict has been inscribed firmly on the international agenda and a solid body of international legal norms and standards has been developed. Important steps have been taken through the application and enforcement of those norms and standards to achieve accountability for grave child rights violations. Indeed, the international community has taken some unprecedented initiatives to address impunity. Punishing crimes of international dimension demonstrates how effective international justice can be when there is political will to support it. The engagement of the Security Council has increased the general awareness of the need to protect children in armed conflict, significantly advanced the scope of action and created opportunities to improve common approaches in this regard.

However, although progress has been made in a number of situations of armed conflict, children are still suffering in many places worldwide and continue to be the primary victims of war. That bitter truth poses a profound challenge to the international legal order, and therefore requires the international community to redouble its efforts to protect children and prevent child rights violations.

With regard to the most serious international crimes, more should be done to put an end to the culture of impunity. Particular consideration should be given to internally displaced children in the context of ensuring their inalienable right to return, and to the implications for the protection of child rights of illegal policies and practices in situations of foreign occupation.

Another challenging issue that requires urgent action is that of children taken hostage and reported missing in connection with armed conflict. Azerbaijan is the main sponsor of the biennial resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council on missing persons, as well as of those of the Commission on the Status of Women on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts, including those subsequently imprisoned.

I would like to refer to the latest resolution of the General Assembly on missing persons. Inter alia, resolution 63/183 requests States to pay the utmost attention to the problem of missing children and to take appropriate measures to search for and identify such children and reunite them with their families. Meanwhile, at its fifty-fourth session, held in March, the Commission on the Status of Women condemned all violent acts against civilian populations and called for an effective response to such acts, in particular the immediate release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts, including by strengthening international cooperation to that end.

We look forward to the adoption of the draft presidential statement before the Council, which will continue to contribute to identifying long-term and sustained solutions to this problem and to focus on the ways and means by which the international community can address existing challenges, including in particular continued violations against children in situations of armed conflict and measures aimed at bringing to justice those responsible for such violations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands): The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union (EU) on behalf of the EU, as well as with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends for children and armed conflict. I would like to make a few additional remarks.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict and for the excellent work Mexico is doing in this area. The Netherlands also appreciates the recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181) and welcomes the steps taken in the implementation of resolution 1882 (2009), as well as the expansion of the Secretary General's annexes to include parties responsible for the killing and maiming of children and for rape and other forms of sexual violence committed against children.

We would also like to congratulate and thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, and her Office for their valuable work, such as the inclusion in the action plans of the two new triggers. The formats for action plans are instrumental in the process of implementation and contribute to reducing the risks for children in armed conflict.

In commending the work done by the Security Council and the Special Representative to alleviate the suffering of children in armed conflict, we would also like to encourage them to pay equal attention to all the six identified grave violations committed against children and to strengthen the monitoring of all of them. In our view, increased capacity should be made available for that purpose.

The Netherlands would like to emphasize the importance of the engagement of the United Nations with non-State actors in the implementation of the Council's resolutions and the recommendations contained in the Secretary General's report, including in the negotiation of action plans. We call on all relevant parties to allow for such engagement, with a view to protecting the rights of children in armed conflict.

As has been said before in the Council, abuse really stops only when perpetrators have been brought to justice. Anything short of that means a continuation of the violation of victims' integrity. In most cases — as the Netherlands also said in this debate last year — the Security Council has, in our view, not done enough to address accountability or to end impunity for perpetrators of violations against children. That is particularly true with regard to so-called persistent violators. This year's report of the Secretary-General lists no fewer than 16 parties that have been on the annex for at least five years. That is unacceptable. We welcome the expressed readiness of the Security Council to step up its action and to adopt targeted measures against persistent perpetrators. We also stress the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the investigation and prosecution of such crimes that fall within its jurisdiction. Where national systems of justice fail, the situation should be referred to the ICC.

In conclusion, the Netherlands would like to express its strong support for the campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that regard, the International Labour Organization Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children also deserve mention. The universal ratification and effective implementation of all those instruments lay the foundation for the safeguarding of children's rights and their effective protection from violence, abuse and exploitation, including during armed conflict.

With the integrity of our children, the integrity of the Organization and everything it stands for is at stake. In children we see our future, and in their suffering during armed conflict we see the dark side of humankind. We all have an urgent obligation to do whatever we can to protect children from armed conflict. That is a political and moral imperative for all of us.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. It is most timely that the Council is considering this important issue following the publication of the recent report by the Secretary-General (S/2010/181). I would also like to join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, the Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF for their vital contributions to the protection of children and for their comprehensive briefings this morning.

Despite the commitment of the international community to addressing this issue, children are still becoming targets and being used in many armed conflicts. In that regard, we must adopt a strategy that addresses the root causes of armed conflicts. That requires promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, the rule of law and the protection of human rights in order to achieve positive results in conflict prevention and enhancing the protection of children.

The Myanmar Government has been seriously addressing the issue of under-age recruitment into the armed forces. Under the Myanmar Defence Services Act of 1959, a person cannot be enlisted in the armed forces until he has attained the age of 18. Those who do not conform to the minimum-age requirement are discharged from the armed forces. We have in place a directorate that oversees military recruitment regulations, orders and directives. But in some cases, underage children who profess to be older or who have no official birth certificate or other documents have slipped into the military. We have therefore also put in place stringent scrutiny at various stages of the recruiting, training and post-training periods. As a result, a total of 344 persons were discharged from the armed forces between 2004 and 2009.

With regard to the reintegration process, in 2009 a total of 100 children were returned to their respective guardians. While underage children were discharged, punitive actions were taken against military personnel who failed to abide by existing recruitment rules and regulations. In 2009, such punitive actions were taken against 36 military personnel.

With regard to the action plan, my Government is closely cooperating with the United Nations country team in order to finalize it by updating our existing plan.

On the advocacy and awareness-raising front, the Myanmar Government, in cooperation with UNICEF and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), has been conducting seminars and workshops for military and police personnel and social workers on the subject of preventing the recruitment of underage children. The Government is also working closely with UNICEF and international NGOs to raise general public awareness on preventing underage recruitment. We strongly believe that such regular training and advocacy programmes will widen the scope of knowledge on those important subjects.

Moreover, through a high-level committee, we have established a mechanism on the prevention of the military recruitment of underage children. The committee has been providing periodic reports to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on a regular basis. The Secretary-General's report has recognized the concrete steps taken by my Government. Myanmar will continue its support for and full cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations country team.

My delegation would like to state categorically that Myanmar is not a country in a situation of armed conflict. Due to the Government's national reconciliation efforts, 17 armed groups have already returned to the legal fold and the people are enjoying unprecedented peace and stability in almost all corners of the country. In that regard, we are of the view that it is no longer relevant to discuss the situation of Myanmar under the thematic issue of children and armed conflict.

While the Government of Myanmar is sincerely and seriously addressing the issue of the recruitment of underage children, we very much regret that our national army, the Tatmadaw Kyi, is still listed under annex I of the Secretary-General's report. We strongly feel that, given our Government's endeavours to put in place the necessary rules, regulations and directives to prohibit the recruitment of underage children, the inclusion of the Tatmadaw Kyi on that list is grossly misleading. My delegation would therefore like to urge that the progress achieved by the Government be duly recognized and that our national army be removed from the list in future reports.

In my conclusion, I would like to say that Myanmar culture and tradition do not support the use of children in armed conflict. The Government is therefore determined to continue to work closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and with the United Nations country team on this issue. We expect that Myanmar will be de-listed from future reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): Let me start by thanking you for, Mr. President, organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict and by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June. My thanks also go to the entire membership of the Security Council for its landmark resolution 1612 (2005) and all previous and subsequent Council resolutions that seek to advance the agenda of children caught in the middle of unfortunate conflicts, in particular resolution 1882 (2009), from which this debate emanated. Permit me also to thank the Secretary-General for his very informative report contained in document S/2010/181. We note with appreciation the recommendations contained therein.

The adoption of the Council's landmark resolution 1612 (2005) was a move in the right direction. My delegation views it as a more realistic, effective and practical approach to addressing the scourge of the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. The establishment of the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, which reports regularly on grave violations, and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict gave more impetus to the issue. Moreover, the resolution appeals to parties to armed conflict to formulate specific action plans to stop the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, thereby providing a framework for compliance. Above all, the resolution carries the message of combating impunity, an issue that is very dear to my country.

My delegation is very much delighted to be a part of this stocktaking exercise today. We believe that it affords States an opportunity to examine efforts made towards the implementation of the resolutions under consideration. For us in Sierra Leone, it is yet another opportunity to tell the international community that we were not only determined to address the question of impunity through the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court, but are also committed to working with the rest of the international community to address the scourge of conscription and the use of innocent children in conflicts, together with other grave violations.

In that respect, we reiterate our wholehearted commendation to the Council for adopting resolution 1882 (2009), which further strengthened the protection framework for children by extending the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include sexual violence and killing and maiming in addition to the issue of the recruitment of children. It is our fervent hope that the Council will work speedily to include the issues of abduction and denial of humanitarian access.

Having gone through a war that witnessed gross and systematic violations of the human rights of children, including but not limited to forceful conscription, forced labour, rape and other forms of despicable atrocities committed against innocent children, we are left with no alternative but to join the fight to end this heinous crime wherever it is committed in the world.

As a State party to the relevant international human rights instruments dedicated to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, we have taken the following practical measures to ensure our adherence to resolution 1612 (2005) and all relevant Security Council resolutions on the issue, including its most recent, resolution 1882 (2009).

In February 2007, we endorsed the Paris Commitments to protect children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups. We enacted child rights acts that raise the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces of Sierra Leone from

17.5 to 18 years of age. In 2002, we established a national commission for war-affected children, which is still functional. We also established a national commission for human rights that has a mandate to examine all cases of human rights, including those of children. We set up a family support unit within the police department to protect children against sexual abuse and exploitation. We established a child protection committee, headed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, that operates in various parts of the country to take care of vulnerable children. Finally, on 8 April 2009, the Special Court of Sierra Leone handed down a verdict against three members of the defunct Revolutionary United Front for committing serious violations of international law — namely, the enlistment, conscription and use of children below the age of 15 to actively participate in hostilities — which is a very important precedent in ending impunity.

Sierra Leone cannot choose to remain silent on this issue simply because we are no longer at war or because we do not appear in annexes I and II of the report before the Council. Although the war ended some eight years ago, its vestiges are still evident in our communities. We are still grappling with issues such as youth unemployment, amputees, children born of rape and roaming ex-child combatants, to mention but a few. All of those challenges need to be adequately addressed if our hard-earned peace is to be sustained.

Many laudable gains have been achieved thanks to the support and assistance provided by our development partners. Let me take this opportunity to assure the Council that Sierra Leone will continue to address this issue by regularly participating in the debate on providing protection for victims and punishing perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children.

It would be remiss of me if I were to conclude my intervention without commending the roles played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children in Armed Conflict, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant Security Council sanctions committees — but more especially the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for its efforts in mainstreaming child protection into peacekeeping missions.

I would like to conclude by calling on all parties to armed conflicts the world over to adopt measures to halt the participation of children in hostilities by working closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and all relevant actors to ensure that the recommendations contained in the report before us are adhered to in accordance with international child protection standards.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Sial (Pakistan): We would like to thank the Mexican presidency for holding this thematic debate. We listened with interest to the presentations made by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF.

Children are our future. A child, whether in the developing or developed world, can be privileged or underprivileged. No matter where they are, children require our equal attention, focus and care. While trying to tackle the present challenges, we all consciously work towards ensuring a better and safer future. That future lies in our children.

The central purpose of the United Nations Charter, that is "to save succeeding generations", is linked to our children as we strive to save them from the scourge of war. We face common cross-cutting issues of health, education and protection, et cetera, when addressing issues related to children in all situations. However, the vulnerability of children in situations of armed conflict requires more attention than any other such issue.

We have carefully reviewed the latest (S/2010/181) and past reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. We would like to take this opportunity to point out that the recent reports have tried to overstretch the definition of armed conflict. No one can deny the importance of caring for our children, and any violation of their rights must be reported and acted upon swiftly. However, we also have to be careful when we overload a reporting mechanism by stretching it beyond its mandate. That results in weakening the message that should be conveyed by a mandate and a report from the Secretary-General on the subject of children and armed conflict.

In the context of Pakistan, the latest report has referred to our law enforcement action against terrorists and extremists as an armed conflict; this action cannot be defined as such under international law. Pakistan has been obliged to undertake certain law enforcement and anti-terror actions with the full support of the nation, in particular that of the people of the affected areas. This was necessary to promote and protect the human rights of the people, especially those of women and children.

We are deeply concerned at the few instances of the abhorrent use of children by extremists in Pakistan and have strongly condemned it. We, however, regret that the situation is mentioned out of context in the report. Let me reiterate that the Government of Pakistan condemns in the strongest terms any use of children by extremists or any other group to promote their egregious agenda and is taking appropriate action in that regard.

UNICEF is Pakistan's key technical partner in the area of children and is providing valuable assistance for children in Pakistan. We have a robust UNICEF country programme. In this debate, we would like to acknowledge the role of UNICEF as the key lead agency on issues of children. We also recognize that the non-governmental organization community has made invaluable contributions in this sphere. For a sustained and meaningful engagement, it is important that civil society should be sensitive in differentiating among situations by maintaining objectivity.

We hope that the future reports of the Secretary-General will be objective, so as not to lose sight of the noble objective of saving our children from the scourge of war.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Council and to speak in this open debate on children and armed conflict. The Philippine Government attaches utmost importance to this subject and gives high priority to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, irrespective of what circumstances they may find themselves in.

The Philippine Government has been actively cooperating with the United Nations on this matter since the beginning. As Council members may note, the collaborative work between the United Nations and my Government started off positively. This was clearly manifested when the Philippine authorities facilitated the December 2008 visit of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to the Philippines, where she met with relevant officials, civil society actors and women and children affected by armed conflict.

During her visit, Ms. Coomaraswamy also had a meeting with the leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to discuss concerns about the presence of children within the ranks of that rebel group. As a result of these talks, an action plan was signed between the United Nations and the MILF on 30 July 2009.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, let me reiterate the position of my Government that engaging non-State armed groups, including for the purpose of securing the protection of children, should be approached in the most careful manner, taking into account the larger peace processes that the Philippine Government is pursuing with non-State groups in the country, particularly with the MILF and the group comprising the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army and the National Democratic Front.

In addition, the Philippine Government has actively pursued with great and sustained vigour the Philippines' comprehensive programme on children involved in armed conflict by directing relevant agencies to work closely to implement the national programmes and monitor compliance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

I wish to stress that the Philippine Constitution itself guarantees the promotion and protection of the rights of children and mandates the State to promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being, defend their right to assistance and provide them special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, exploitation, cruelty and other conditions harmful to their development.

At this point let me briefly address the concerns regarding alleged violations committed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The Philippines regards such allegations with seriousness and deep concern. It is in this regard that we immediately requested Manila to investigate the allegations to verify the accuracy of the negative reports. The response of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to the allegations was duly forwarded to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. It contains a point-by-point explanation regarding the allegations contained in the report. With respect, for instance, to alleged military operations mentioned in the report, according to which children were adversely affected, the point-by-point explanation stated that, in fact, no military operation occurred on the dates sited.

Let me, however, assure the Council that the Philippine Government will remain untiring and vigilant in the investigation of the allegations and will enforce the necessary measures to ensure the protection of children wherever they may be and whatever circumstances they may be in.

Challenges, of course, remain as we move forward to address the difficult situation of children in conflict areas. But cases of children in difficult circumstances in armed conflict in the Philippines, we would like to stress, are not really rampant.

The new Administration of President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III will take further steps and measures to implement a long-lasting solution in ensuring the protection of children in difficult circumstances. With that, we hope that we will soon be de-listed from annex II of resolution 1612 (2005) so that the Council can devote more of its time to its core competencies in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

We await the conclusions and recommendations of the Security Council's Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, to be released next month. We stand ready to continue to work with the United Nations and other stakeholders to uphold and carry out the protection of the rights of children, including those in the midst of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. I also thank the Secretary-General for his ninth report on the issue, contained in document S/2010/181. We believe that his recommendations merit careful consideration and subsequent implementation and compliance by Member States and parties to armed conflict. Having said that, I would like to mention that reporting might preferably be confined to, and carefully concentrate on, the mandates of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We commend the Security Council and its Working Group for their continued efforts in ending violations against children in armed conflict. Those initiatives have yielded significant and tangible successes. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report, last year, too, several listed parties to armed conflict signed agreements to adopt action plans to end their recruitment or use of child soldiers. The United Nations system-wide response to this issue is also laudable. In that connection, I take this opportunity to thank UNICEF for its leadership role in the monitoring and reporting mechanism. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her team deserve our particular praise for their dedicated efforts.

While addressing this matter, we have to focus a bit more on the supply side of the issue. The use of children by non-State armed groups does not take place in a vacuum. A range of conditions, many of which underlie the conflict itself, also make children vulnerable to joining groups that participate in that conflict. Conditions that might make children in those settings vulnerable to recruitment include poverty, discrimination, inequality, exclusion, hopelessness and desperate situations. They also include a culture of political violence, tensions over issues of religion and identity and a history of the use of child soldiers, all of which combine to create a situation where conflict is possible and where children can be used or abused by armed groups. Success in ending children's involvement in armed conflicts therefore depends largely on addressing the root causes of motivation and desperation and on building societies where the rights and dignity and the hope for a better future of all children are upheld.

Needless to say, we still have a long way to go. The pace of progress is still slow, and its impact is not yet felt by the thousands of children in the ranks of fighting forces. While progress has been made through action plans to release child soldiers in several situations of concern, the overall situation of children in armed conflict remains grave. There are 55 entities on the list contained in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report, out of which 16 have been there for at least 5 years. Some kind of enforcement criteria should be contemplated to make parties listed in the annexes, particularly persistent violators, comply fully with the action plans in a time-bound manner. Caution, however, has to be taken to make sure that such enforcement in no way hurts the very vulnerable group we are addressing here: children.

Peace remains the main hope for securing the release of child soldiers from armed forces and groups. While we appreciate the gradual expansion of child protection provisions in peacekeeping missions, we would nevertheless like to see such provisions be made an integral part of the mandate of all ongoing and future peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions.

The issues of children under foreign occupation need to be appropriately addressed. In line with paragraph 198 of the Secretary-General's report, we hope that all parties in situations of armed conflict will adhere to international normative instruments protecting educational facilities from attacks.

It has been 10 years since the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict entered into force. We note with sadness that one third of the States Members of the United Nations are still not party to it. We would like to urge those States to become parties to the Protocol. Children are the future of our world and they bear the torch of the culture of peace. It is our solemn duty to protect their physical safety and their right to live on planet Earth with their minds free of fear and filled with hopes and dreams.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): I would like to join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. Allow me also to commend and thank Manju Gurung, a Nepalese former child soldier, for her presentation on this topic, which I am sure touched everyone in the Chamber and highlighted vividly the plight of children affected by armed conflict. We also express our gratitude to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her commitment, tireless efforts and outstanding work to ensure that children live and grow in peace and dignity.

Armenia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union earlier today. I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Conflicts have devastating consequences on children. Their protection deserves the utmost attention of the international community and should be a primary responsibility of all of us, because it is a serious humanitarian concern and a significant security issue. The protection of children therefore requires a multidimensional approach.

Armenia takes note of some positive trends in recent years in the area of the protection of children in armed conflict. A set of legal instruments has been adopted that provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the issue. As a country that has already acceded to the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Armenia welcomes and strongly supports the Special Representative's campaign for the universal ratification of those important international instruments, which can bring about positive change in the process of uniting our efforts to protect children.

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2010/181) and its recommendations, and we commend the work of the Security Council Working Group on the issue, which has earned sound public and political acknowledgment.

It is unfortunate that, despite the existence of international legal instruments and normative mechanisms, children continue to suffer in conflict situations. I come from a region that, over the past two decades, has witnessed a number of armed conflicts. As mine a country that has hosted tens of thousands of refugee children, the issue on today's agenda is of particular concern for the Government of Armenia. Despite past and current socio-economic hardships in our country, the post-conflict rehabilitation of children — in particular issues of health care and education — continue to be at the centre of the Government's attention.

Today, a final resolution of the conflicts in the South Caucasus is still pending. A no-war/no-peace situation cannot ensure a safe and decent future for children and young people who have already witnessed atrocities of war. It is our belief that only a fundamental and comprehensive political settlement of the current disputes can bring long-lasting peace and stability to the region, thereby securing the rights of our children to a peaceful future.

Having had the privilege of chairing the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fourth session, in March, I would like to emphasize that special attention needs to be paid to children who are victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, especially girls, who are usually the largest group of victims in armed conflicts. In addition to physical damage, sexual violence often leaves lasting harm and stigma.

This year again, by recalling the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council on children and armed conflict, as well as relevant provisions contained in the instruments of international humanitarian law relative to the protection of civilian populations, the Commission on the Status of Women expressed grave concern about the continuation of armed conflicts in many regions of the world and the human suffering and humanitarian emergencies that they had caused.

To that end, efforts to address sexual violence could greatly benefit from more collaboration among various United Nations and regional organizations that are focused on the protection of children, as well as those working on issues relating to gender equality and empowerment and the rights of women and girls.

Armenia commends the work of civil society in developing effective policies for the protection of children in armed conflict and the direct help that many non-governmental organizations provide on the ground, sometimes in the most dangerous situations. All relevant stakeholders should continue to work closely and actively on the issues of gender-based violence in armed conflict, and we encourage similar cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the Security Council and other international organizations working on the protection of children in armed conflict.

Child protection is everyone's responsibility, and the future of children is dependent on the actions we take today. Armenia has worked and will continue to work closely and constructively with the United Nations and other interested institutions and organizations concerned with bettering the situation of children around the world, including those affected by armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council takes note with appreciation of the ninth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181) and the recommendations contained therein, as well as the positive developments referred to in the report, and notes the continuing challenges in the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and other relevant resolutions reflected therein.
>
> "The Security Council reiterates its equally strong condemnation of all violations of applicable international law involving the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict, as well as their re-recruitment, killing and maiming, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict. The Council condemns all other violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, committed against children in situations of armed conflict. The Council demands that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children.
>
> "The Security Council expresses deep concern about the growing number of attacks or threats of attacks in contravention of applicable international law against schools and educational facilities, and teachers and pupils, in particular the specific targeting of girls, and in this regard calls upon all parties to armed conflict to cease immediately these violations of international humanitarian law.
>
> "The Security Council welcomes the steps taken by the Secretary-General in the implementation of resolution 1882 (2009) by including in the annexes of his report those parties to armed conflict that engage, in contravention of applicable international law, in patterns of killing and maiming of children and/or rape and other sexual violence, in situations of armed conflict.

"The Security Council calls upon the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts to ensure the strengthening of the monitoring and reporting mechanism's capacities with a view to the implementation of resolution 1882 (2009) to allow for prompt advocacy and effective response to all violations and abuses committed against children, inter alia, by ensuring that all relevant United Nations agencies actively help to collect accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable information on acts of rape and other sexual violence committed against children; and also by ensuring synergies and avoiding overlap among relevant United Nations entities at the headquarters and country levels, as requested by resolutions 1882 (2009) and 1888 (2009).

"The Security Council reaffirms its decision in operative paragraph 11 of its resolution 1882 (2009) to continue to include specific provisions for the protection of children in the mandates of all relevant United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions, encourages the deployment of child protection advisers to such missions and calls upon the Secretary-General to ensure that such advisers are recruited and deployed in line with the Council's relevant country-specific resolutions and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations policy directive on mainstreaming the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict. It further underscores the importance of training on child rights and child protection for all personnel involved in United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions, and in this regard welcomes the ongoing efforts by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in developing the policy implementation plan, including training programmes and materials.

"The Security Council welcomes the progress made in preventing and responding to violations and abuses committed against children especially with regard to the signing of action plans by some parties, as mentioned in the ninth report of the Secretary-General.

"The Security Council reiterates its call on parties to armed conflict listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict that have not already done so to prepare and implement, without further delay, action plans to halt recruitment and use of children, patterns of killing and maiming of children and/or rape and other sexual violence against children, in violation of applicable international law, in situations of armed conflict.

"The Security Council also reiterates its call on all parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict to address all other violations and abuses committed against children and to undertake specific commitments and measures in this regard.

"The Security Council expresses deep concern that certain parties persist in committing violations and abuses against children, and expresses its readiness to adopt targeted and graduated measures against persistent perpetrators, taking into account the relevant provisions of its resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009).

To this end, the Council invites:

(a) its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to exchange pertinent information with relevant sanctions committees, in particular through the communication of the Working Group's relevant recommendations;

(b) its relevant sanctions committees to consider inviting more regularly the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to brief them on specific information contained in the Secretary-General's reports;

(c) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to share specific information contained in the Secretary-General's reports with the expert groups of relevant sanctions committees.

"The Security Council expresses its intention, when establishing or renewing the mandate of relevant sanctions committees, to consider provisions pertaining to parties that are in violation of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict.

"The Security Council expresses its readiness to consider specific recommendations from its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on violations and abuses committed against children by parties listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports, whenever they occur, with a view to considering action on them, without prejudging or implying a decision by the Security Council as to whether or not to include a particular situation in its agenda.

"The Security Council calls on concerned Member States to take decisive and immediate action against persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict and further calls on them to bring to justice those responsible for such violations that are prohibited under applicable international law, including with regard to the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, and rape and other sexual violence, through national justice systems and, where applicable, international justice mechanisms and mixed criminal courts and tribunals, with a view to ending impunity for those committing crimes against children.

"Given the regional dimensions of some armed conflicts referred to in the Secretary-General's report, the Security Council reiterates its request that United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions, as well as United Nations country teams, within their respective mandates and in close cooperation with the Governments of the concerned countries, develop appropriate strategies and coordination mechanisms for cooperation and the exchange of information on cross-border child protection issues.

"The Security Council welcomes the overall work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and highlights the importance of her field visits in enhancing dialogue with concerned Governments and parties to the conflict, including by negotiating action plans, securing commitments, advocating for appropriate response mechanisms and ensuring appropriate attention and follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

"The Security Council also welcomes the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Children's Fund in carrying out its mandate on child protection by supporting the overall development and implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and ensuring an appropriate response to the question of children in armed conflict, and encourages it to continue to follow up, through the monitoring and reporting mechanisms of the country task forces, on relevant conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

"The Security Council welcomes the sustained activity of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and stresses the importance of continuing to adopt timely conclusions and recommendations in line with resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009). Furthermore, the Council invites the Working Group to fully implement its toolkit (S/2006/724), inter alia, by carrying out a country-specific visit within one year to examine a situation referred to in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report in order to better fulfil its mandate and enhance its capacity to protect children affected by armed conflict.

"Recalling previous presidential statements on children and armed conflict, as well as paragraph 18 of resolution 1882 (2009), the security Council reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to provide administrative and substantive support for its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and further requests the Secretary-General to take action on this subject within one month of this date.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to submit a report by May 2011 on the implementation of its resolutions and presidential statements on children and armed conflict, including the present statement."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2010/10.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.